

A brand is seen as a guarantee of consistent quality and can be used to attract and better satisfy clients and enhance brand loyalty and equity. When selecting the hotels, a strong and unique brand reduces the perceived risks and search cost. This is also a fragment of brand equity and thus, enhancing the brand equity is becoming prominent trends (Chieng & Goi, 2011; Wood, 2000). According to existing literature, it is clear that brand equity concept is playing major role in hotel industry.

As described by Ngarachu (2015) that wedding tourism is a developing service product in the tourism industry and it is creating an extremely competitive market segment as destinations and their service providers hope to gain a share of this niche segment. To be competitive, destinations need to be innovative in responding to the growing demands of tourists. The wedding tourism product is one such demand. Wedding tourism, that is, travelling internationally for the purpose of getting married or celebrating a wedding (Acorn Consulting Partnership Ltd., 2008) has become increasingly popular in recent years (Major, McLeay & Waine, 2010, p. 249).

Dimensions of customer-based brand equity for a tourist destination were identified by Konecnik & Gartner (2007) and Pike (2007). Initially this CBBE concept introduced by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), and they conceptualized the Brand equity in different ways. Furthermore, Konecnik (2005) and later Konecnik & Gartner (2007) has been developed and extended this concept as Customer based Brand Equity for Tourists Destinations (CBBETD). However, to integrate, the CBBE model has to be more complete, the major problem is that the CBBE model has still not been investigated and applied in any studies of the wedding tourism segment.

Thus, the main advantage of this academic study is to apply the conceptual model of CBBE to the wedding tourism industry & offer very voluble insight of relationship among CBBE dimensions. Therefore, this research study is focused to identify whether customer based brand equity (CBBE) model would help to measure customer satisfaction levels of Southern region as a wedding destination and to find out major influencing factors that lead to retention and attraction of wedding customers to Southern Region of Sri Lanka.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main research objective of this study is to examine what factors determine and enhance the present promotional strategies for a wedding tourism destination with special reference to the Customer Based Brand Equity in the context of Southern Region in Sri Lanka. Even though, wedding tourism is a growth market, an empirical studies shows that there is a huge research gap in Sri Lankan context to examine the effectiveness of wedding tourism. Therefore, this research also examines whether customer based brand equity is an effective method in promoting wedding tourism in Sri Lanka.