This report is published by Antyra Solutions (Private) Limited, in order to understand the impact of the Easter Sunday Attacks and its aftermath on the Hotel Sector, online. This report acts as a preliminary analysis, given the recency of the events that occurred. Newer editions of the report will be published when further data is available.

This report is an independent initiative by Antyra Solutions (Private) Limited, an integrated agency specializing in Travel and Hospitality marketing. The views expressed are private and unaffiliated with any governmental or tourism organization.

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Report Overview

The purpose of this report is to offer context to the online chatter and better understand the impact to Sri Lanka’s Hotel Industry online, post the Easter Sunday Attacks of 21st April 2019 and incidents of communal violence in the days that followed. The report is compiled through a collection of data from publicly available research tools, paid monitoring tools and private data collated with the permission of 54 individual hotels, resorts, villas and other boutique properties belonging to prominent hospitality brands (3 stars and above + boutique / luxury properties).

The creation of this report and interpretation of data offered is by Antyra Solutions (Private) Limited and the sentiments expressed are wholly private. Data from budget, B&B and similar accommodation types are not included in this initial publication.

Online channels monitored include Google, Blogs, Forums, Social Media, News Sites, Hotel Brand Website and Booking Engine Platforms.

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TIMELINE 2019
EASTER SUNDAY ATTACK

EASTER SUNDAY ATTACKS
Death Toll and Tourist Casualty Reporting by the Media

Social Media Ban Implemented

Island Wide Curfew Imposed

Travel Advisories Issued by Major Tourism Source Destinations

Scattered Reports of Communal Violence (published by a major Media outlet)

UK Travel Advisory: All but Essential Travel

Level 3 Travel Advisory Imposed by USA

Aeroflot Cancels Flights to Sri Lanka

Larger Scale Communal Violence Reported
Topics of conversations and online search patterns were monitored during the period defined to better understand volume, tone and light of the dialogue relating to Sri Lanka.

Search terms were used to understand the demand for information, ‘what do people want to know’. Mention monitoring was introduced to track online conversations across Social Media, Web, Forums and Blogs to identify mentions that included the term “Sri Lanka” as an insight to ‘what people are talking about’. To offer a better perspective of non-Sri Lankan exposure and sentiment, mention monitoring excluded conversations from Sri Lanka.

To address technology specific biases and tool specific tracking methods, the same monitoring platforms were used across this study to offer comparable context in all monitoring results, across all points of comparison. To categorize data sets for comparison the time period before 21st April 2019 will be referred to as ‘pre-incident’ and the period starting from 21st April 2019 will be referred to as ‘post-incident’.

The objective is to better ascertain the reaction of a global audience.
A Situation Analysis was carried out for the purposes of understanding the interest in Sri Lanka following the terrorist attacks on 21st April 2019 and the events that followed. Since the events unfolded, there was an immediate spike in Sri Lanka-related online queries and topics, as measured on Google. Search terms used during this period point to a clear demand to understand the unfolding situation by a global audience. Topics were primarily focused on the terror attacks, safety and links to terrorist organizations.

**Top Search Terms Contributing to the Spike in Interest**

- sri lanka bombings
- sri lanka bomb blast
- sri lanka atentado
- sri lanka blasts
- blast in sri lanka
- srilanka blast
- anders holch povlsen*
- bomb blast in sri lanka
- sri lanka blast
- sri lanka blast news
- pray for sri lanka
- bombing in sri lanka
- srilanka bomb
- sri lanka explosions
- bombing sri lanka
- what happened in sri lanka
- is sri lanka safe
- srilanka safety now
- sri lanka blast news
- aanslag sri lanka
- bombings in sri lanka
- sri lanka bomb
- Sri Lanka ISIS attack
- sri lanka blast today
- pray for sri lanka

*Anders Holch Povlsen – The Danish Billionaire that tragically lost three children in the Easter Sunday Attacks.

Terms highlighted in yellow are likely direct Tourism related queries.
Search interest waned significantly within a 7-day period following the attack, which can be construed as a slow-down in demand for further information. Large scale communal violence was reported from 13th May 2019 across parts of the island but a noticeable increase in Sri Lanka related online queries cannot be seen.

Comparing recent global events, to offer context of scale

Conversationally, the demand for information regarding Sri Lanka post-incident is estimated to be significantly higher to the global audience reaction of the Christchurch attack. Both events are dwarfed by the Notre Dame fire and demand for said information.
Topics of conversation across content platforms such as social media, news sites, forums, blogs and similar also showed significant levels of activity in the immediate aftermath of the attack.

A 556,575% increase in mentions across social media and content sites were seen comparing 10th April 2019 to 15th May 2019 to the previous 35 days. Mentions of Sri Lanka were estimated to be seen 119,745,025 times (impressions of mentions as monitored via a listening tool.)
Contrary to the ‘demand for information’ pattern as measured through Google Searches, conversations during the 13th May 2019 communal violence episode generated a larger conversation on content sites, with the largest contribution to same from Twitter, with an overwhelmingly negative sentiment.

Snapshot from sources

Source: https://twitter.com

Source: www.cnbc.com
This Muslim owned pasta factory was burnt to the ground by extremist mobs yesterday.

70% of the staff employed were Sinhalese (Buddhists).

Witnesses say a group of at least 500 mobs destroyed the factory in Minuwangoda, Sri Lanka.

via DOAM.

---

Sri Lanka is burning — again

Buddhist Mobs Target Muslims in Sri Lanka Following Deadly Easter Bombings

New violence has reignited fears that loneliness fostered by war and State militancy.

---

86% of existing bookings to #SriLanka hotels were cancelled during the 3 days after the deadly blasts on #EasterSunday

---

Buddhists are carrying out a wave of terror against Muslims in Sri Lanka, and it's happening so easily because Buddhists are decapitating the same idiots in conspiracies that were generated and distributed by genocidal Buddhists in nearby Myanmar.

---

Businesses in Sri Lanka capital advise staff to stay indoors amid security threats

Businesses in Sri Lanka capital advise staff to stay indoors amid security threats COLOMBO. Sri Lanka — The latest on the...
Snapshot of Post-Incident Content

Online queries on Search Engines lead users to websites. An analysis of the content and topics on said websites visited by those in the United Kingdom, is offered as a snapshot to better understand content consumption post the Easter Sunday Attacks. ‘Sri Lanka Safe’ was used as the primary search term to filter content and the United Kingdom was chosen as it is a primary tourism source market.

Examples of questions asked about the ‘Easter Sunday Bombings’ by UK users on Search Engines

What is happening in Sri Lanka and the explosions in churches?
What is Pakistan’s role in Sri Lanka blasts on April 2019?
What buildings have been targeted for explosions in Sri Lanka?
What happened in the Sri Lankan attack?
Top Headlines from websites / content served in response to the above questions are shown for reference

Sri Lanka's tourism sector counts the toll of Easter attacks
Sri Lanka attacks: What we know about the Easter bombings
Easter bombs are a test of Sri Lanka’s faith relations
Sri Lanka’s President: Country Is Safe After Easter Attacks
Police arrest more than 100 after anti-Muslim riots – Sri Lanka attacks
Sri Lankan Muslims fear for safety after Easter Sunday attacks
Sri Lanka Bans Face Coverings After Easter Sunday Attacks
Sri Lankan churches hold first Sunday masses since attacks
Sri Lankan church schools to reopen after Easter bombings
Sri Lanka’s hotels, beaches and eateries now empty of tourists

Examples of questions asked about ‘Travel Planned (to Sri Lanka)’ by UK users on Search Engines

How safe is Sri Lanka for travel one month after the attack?
Is it safe to travel to Sri Lanka?
Is Sri Lanka still safe to visit?
Is it safe to travel to Sri Lanka in June 2019?
Is Colombo, Sri Lanka a safe place to visit?
Is a trip to Sri Lanka in July advisable?

Top Headlines from websites / content served in response to the above questions are shown for reference

Sri Lanka travel advice
Travel insurance ‘will not cover’ cancelled Sri Lanka holidays
Crime and safety
Is It Safe To Travel To Sri Lanka Right Now
Sri Lanka
Latest Sri Lanka Travel Alerts and Warnings
Travel Advisor Risk and Responsibility in Sri Lanka – Skift
Is Sri Lanka safe to travel? Everything you need to know! [2019 guide]
Sri Lanka: after the terror attacks, what are travellers’ options?
In the context of the conversations relating to Sri Lanka post the Easter Sunday Attacks, the measurable impact on the Hotel Sector online was analyzed through an audit of hotel brand demand and rate search patterns.
Online Brand Impact

The difference in brand search volumes post the Easter Sunday Attacks as well as in comparison to 2018.

Methodology

Review period

21st April 2018  ➔  4th May 2018
21st April 2019  ➔  4th May 2019

A sample of 54 individual hotels (3 star and above), villas and boutique properties belonging to prominent hospitality brands in Sri Lanka were used in this study.

An online search for a specific hotel brand name (and its permutations) is used as a measure of ‘direct intent’, a user wanting more information specifically about said brand. The volume of searches and weekly / monthly patterns in volume can be used to infer the time-based demand for a specific brand.

Note

Sri Lanka typically experiences a ‘high’ and ‘low’ season for tourism arrivals corresponding to Monsoons / rainy weather. The ‘low’ season starts in mid-April and a usual pattern of decline can be seen from March to April and May. After the Easter Sunday Attacks, a larger than normal decline is visible. A year-on-year analysis is also provided to quantify the difference in demand beyond the usual ‘low’ season decline.

If a significant shift in Google ranks had occurred during periods of review, said data points were removed.
Brand Demand Trend

Period

21st April 2019 — 4th May 2019

Easter Sunday Attacks

X-axis: Aggregated Volume of Search Impressions  
Y-axis: Time Period

Brand Demand Data from 7th April to 4th May 2019

A sharp decline is visible from 21st April 2019 onwards.

A drop of 56.69% can be seen across all properties reviewed.
Brand Demand Trend 2018 vs 2019

X-axis: Aggregated Volume of Search Impressions  
Y-axis: Time Period

Brand Demand Data from 7th April to 4th May 2018 vs 2019

A considerable year-on-year decline can be seen.

A drop of 51.36% can be seen across all properties reviewed.
Demand Impact by District

Periods

7th April to 20th April → Pre-Incident

21st April to 4th May → Post-Incident
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Pre-Incident</th>
<th>Post-Incident</th>
<th>Percentage Increase / Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ampara</td>
<td>1364</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>-71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badulla</td>
<td>1806</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>-65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batticaloa</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>-53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>1232</td>
<td>-35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galle</td>
<td>15465</td>
<td>5440</td>
<td>-65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gampaha</td>
<td>28574</td>
<td>14563</td>
<td>-49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hambantota</td>
<td>12136</td>
<td>3779</td>
<td>-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffna</td>
<td>1862</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalutara</td>
<td>9127</td>
<td>3549</td>
<td>-61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandy</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matale</td>
<td>11983</td>
<td>4827</td>
<td>-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matara</td>
<td>4202</td>
<td>2377</td>
<td>-43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaragala</td>
<td>1531</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuwara Eliya</td>
<td>11666</td>
<td>6062</td>
<td>-48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polonnaruwa</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>-43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puttalam</td>
<td>1166</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>-62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demand Impact by District 2018 vs 2019

Periods

- **21st April 2018** → **4th May 2018**
- **21st April 2019** → **4th May 2019**

- **Jaffna**: -73%
- **Batticaloa**: -61%
- **Matale**: -56%
- **Ampara**: -73%
- **Nuwara Eliya**: -41%
- **Monaragala**: -59%
- **Gampaha**: -43%
- **Colombo**: -32%
- **Kalutara**: -61%
- **Galle**: -67%
- **Matara**: -40%
- **Hambantota**: -43%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Percentage Increase / Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ampara</td>
<td>1498</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>-73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batticaloa</td>
<td>2260</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>-61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>1820</td>
<td>1232</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galle</td>
<td>11842</td>
<td>3912</td>
<td>-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gampaha</td>
<td>22535</td>
<td>12900</td>
<td>-43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hambantota</td>
<td>6080</td>
<td>3492</td>
<td>-43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffna</td>
<td>2316</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>-73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalutara</td>
<td>7960</td>
<td>3141</td>
<td>-61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matale</td>
<td>10610</td>
<td>4703</td>
<td>-56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matara</td>
<td>3860</td>
<td>2330</td>
<td>-40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaragala</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuwara Eliya</td>
<td>8804</td>
<td>5190</td>
<td>-41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note
The hotels reviewed are not evenly distributed among regions reviewed. 2018 data is unavailable for some properties reviewed. Said properties and districts located were removed during the year-on-year comparison.
Online Rate Demand

Rate searches on brand websites are used to quantify booking demand and planning intent. The difference in volume and trend are used to quantify the effects of the Easter Sunday Attacks and its aftermath on online bookings.

Methodology

Of the 54 participating properties, 34 have online booking engines available from 2018 to offer a rate search trend comparison. When a user visits an online booking engine connected to a hotel brand website and enters a check-in / check-out date to conduct a rate search, it is considered a rate request and indicator of booking intent. The rate searches conducted during a specific period is used to infer demand during said period while the check-in date is used to infer the time-period of travel.

In analyzing online booking demand, paid online advertising efforts such as Search Engine Advertising and Social Media Advertising would differ during the periods reviewed. As such, these data sources were also removed, evaluating non-paid channels only.

As most properties shifted focus to local promotions in the immediate aftermath, statistics from Sri Lanka were removed to offer a more accurate picture of non-Sri Lankan demand.
A 55.10% decrease in booking demand outside of Sri Lanka can be seen.

Using the check-in date of a rate search, the year-on-year demand for specific months during the period of review was analyzed.
Using the check-in date of a rate search, the year-on-year demand for specific months during the period of review was analyzed.
The unfolding situation and recency of the events discussed make it difficult to offer a concrete forecast on future direction. Periodic updates to this report are planned based on the availability of additional data.

Two data points stand out in assessing the situation; the difference in online search behavior and social media / content platform behavior. An immediate spike in Sri Lanka related terms in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday Attacks on Google Search can be interpreted as a demand for information. A global audience trying to understand what happened. This spike gradually declines and in a 45-day analysis of Sri Lanka related topics, we see a demand for Sri Lanka related information normalizing at pre-attack levels, even during episodes of communal violence. Social media and content platforms show a different trend, with communal violence being discussed more than the Easter Sunday Attacks by a non-Sri Lankan audience. Tweets and other forms of content are ‘going viral’, with people passing on the message as evident through re-tweets and shares. This below the line exposure has the potential to cause long-term harm to Sri Lanka Tourism as potential future travelers can be exposure to on-going negative messaging.

The analysis of booking demand data from hotel websites show an unexpected trend. We had expected to see a sharper decline in the immediate months after the Easter Sunday Attacks and some level of normalization towards the 2019 Winter Season in comparison to 2018. However, this trend was inverted with April, May, June showing a smaller decline percentage compared to the rest of the year. Further data collection initiatives and later editions of this report will attempt to better explain this trend.

We at present venture an assumption based on two potential factors. First, Travel Bans and the severity levels of same were gradually imposed / changed. The media exposure could also have taken some time during the data collection period. The full impact of these scenarios may have in turn taken time to impact the trend seen. Secondly, travelers who had already made financial commitments, non-refundable bookings or similar may have still considered travelling to Sri Lanka during the rate search period of 21st April to 15th May 2019.

The 60%+ decline in booking demand seen towards the latter stages of the year and early 2020 is a cause for concern as it implies those that had considered travel to Sri Lanka at a future date were now reconsidering same. The silver-lining though, is that 1,000s of people are still looking for rates post 21st April 2019.

As the situation develops, and a tangible response from Governmental authorities, institutions as well as the hotel sector itself take root, online conversation monitoring and booking demand trends will be analyzed periodically. An increase in positive sentiment in the tone of online conversations relating to Sri Lanka and the reduction in the difference in booking demand comparing 2018 vs 2019 will offer a window into the success of efforts made.
The larger the dataset, the better our forecasting ability. If you would like to add your hotel data to be anonymized and used for the preparation of future editions of this report, do drop us a line at info@antyrasolutions.com.

Help us Improve

Additional Resources

Future Bookings
Suggestions for a Faster Recovery

Audit your Data
Better Understand Your Consumer

Build your Digital Strategy

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Sources

- Google Trends
- Google Search Console
- Google Keyword Planner
- Google Analytics
- Paid Social Media Listening Tool
- Paid Topic Research Tool
- Brand Hotel Websites (not identified by name to maintain anonymity of data)
- Guestination (Antyra’s Booking Engine Platform)
- www.gov.uk
- www.nytimes.com
- www.adaderana.lk
- www.time.com
- www.twitter.com
- www.wsj.com
- www.washingtonpost.com

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