

ANTYRA
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SINGAPORE • SRI LANKA



SRI LANKA HOTEL SECTOR IMPACT **ONLINE**

VOLUME TWO

2019

MAY – JUNE 2019 REVIEW

Researched and Published By
ANTYRA SOLUTIONS (PRIVATE) LIMITED

Photo by Thiago Cerqueira on Unsplash

Note

Volume 2.0 of this report is published by Antyra Solutions (Private) Limited to better understand the impact of the Easter Sunday Attacks and its aftermath on the Sri Lankan Hotel Industry, as seen on online channels. Based on available public and private data, our understanding of the data and insights derived from the same are published to offer quantifiable perspective.

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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SRILANKA ONLINE TOURISM IMPACT

VOLUME TWO

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Foreword

The preliminary edition of this report (volume 1.0) was published on 17th May 2019. It is available for download at <https://www.antyrasolutions.com/sri-lanka-hotel-sector-impact-report/>. The report delved into an analysis of online conversations monitored through mentions, demand for information as measured through online search as well as the immediate impact to hotels as measured through rate demand data, booking data and similar indicators.

Report Overview

At the time of this publication, a little over two months have passed since the Easter Sunday Attacks. During this period, governments of Sri Lanka's primary tourism source markets had issued travel advisories in general warning against all but essential travel to Sri Lanka and most have also since, softened their stance. Volume 2.0 of this report delves primarily into the analysis of the continued impact seen during the period of review and corresponding demand for Sri Lankan hotels and tourist locales.

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

Note

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Situation Analysis | Online

With the commencement of the Cricket World Cup, online conversations and demand for information relating to Sri Lanka was largely dominated by Sri Lanka’s participation in the tournament. As such, the analysis was segmented as follows:

- **General conversations relating to Sri Lanka**
- **Tourism related online demand for Sri Lanka**
- **Demand for popular tourist destinations**

Methodology

Topics of conversations and online search patterns were monitored during the period defined, to better understand the conversations relating to Sri Lanka. Search terms were used to understand the demand for information, ‘what do people want to know’. Topic research tools and mention monitoring was introduced to track online conversations across Social Media, Web, Forums and Blogs with the intention of understanding ‘what people are talking about’.

General conversations are considered the larger set of data with inclusions and permutations of the term ‘Sri Lanka’ used to extract data and evaluate the subject matter under discussion. Destination specific terms were used to monitor the difference in year-on-year demand from key tourism source markets. Tourism related terms such as ‘holidays, hotels, tours, beaches’ related to Sri Lanka were used to specifically quantify demand relating to the hospitality sector year-on-year.

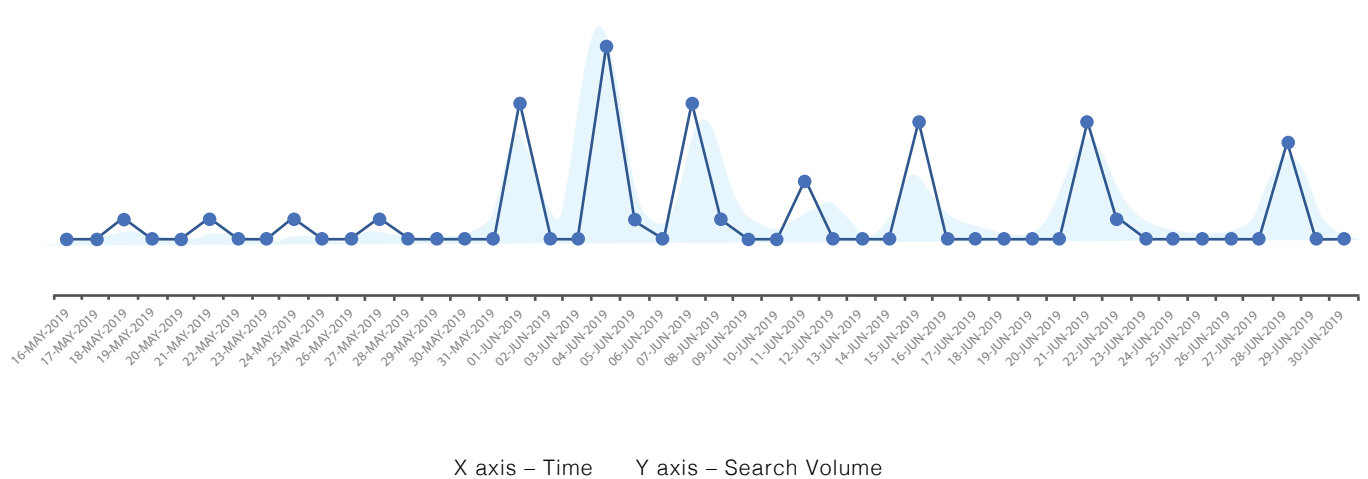
To address technology specific biases and tool specific tracking methods, the same monitoring platforms were used across this study to offer comparable context in all monitoring results, across all points of comparison.

General Conversations

Monitoring Period	16 th May 2019	→	30 th June 2019
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Demand for Information

Online demand for Sri Lanka has seemingly moved on with the Cricket World Cup eclipsing all topics across a global audience.



Examples of Top Search Terms Contributing to the Spikes in Interest

sri lanka vs

afghanistan sri lanka

afghanistan vs sri lanka

sri lanka pakistan

sri lanka world cup

sri lanka cricket

australia sri lanka

sri lanka england

sri lanka match

lanka sri news

sri lanka vs pakistan

new zealand sri lanka

sri lanka south africa

sri lanka score

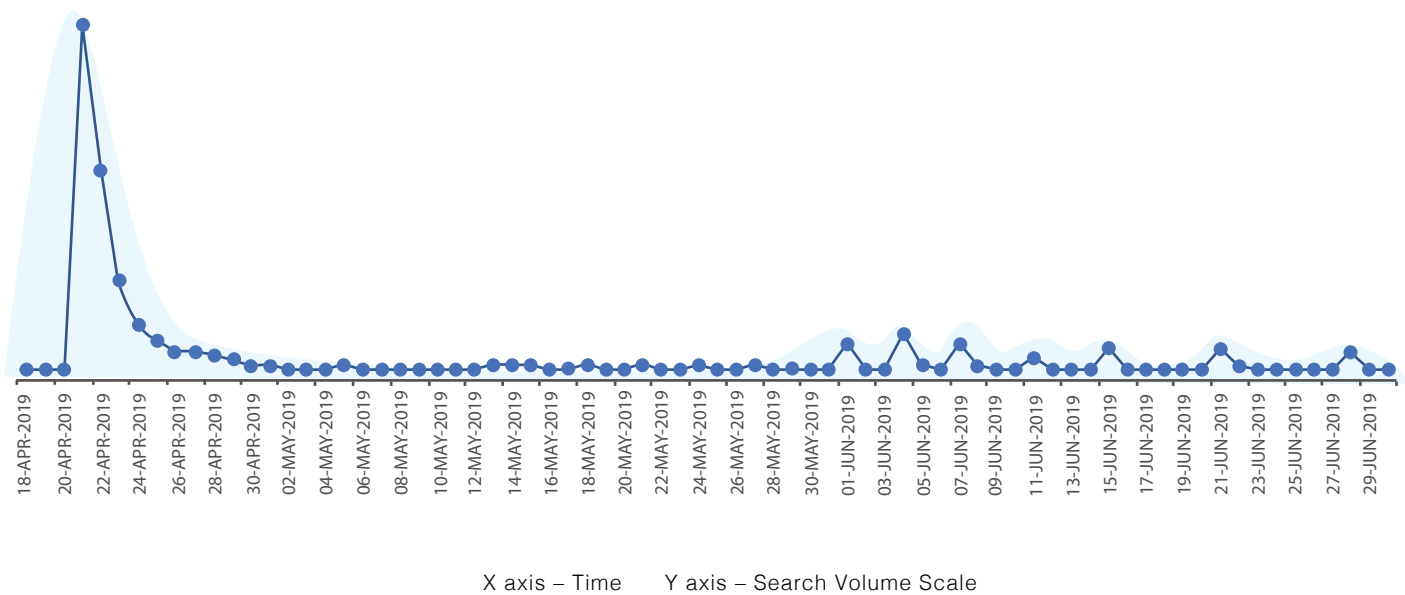
sri lanka vs australia

england vs sri lanka

sri lanka vs new zealand

bangladesh sri lanka

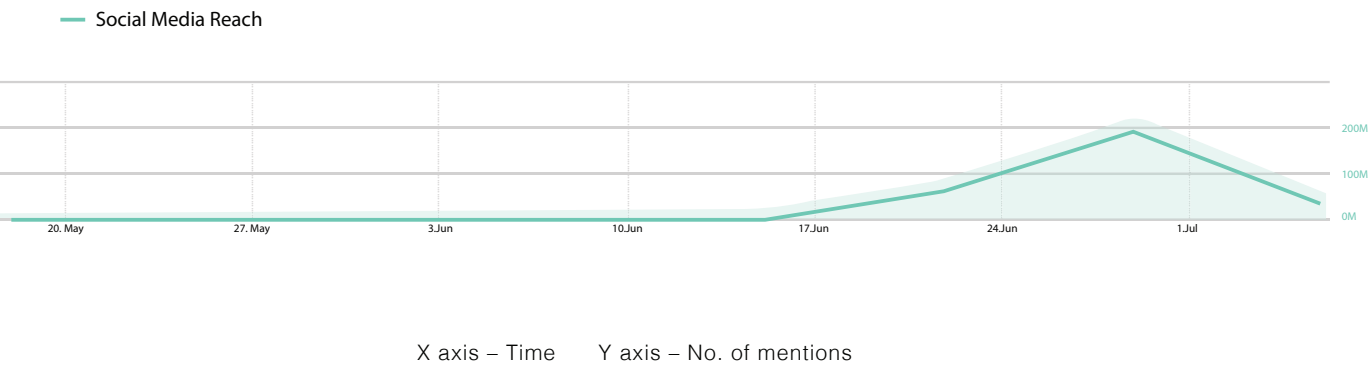
Analyzing search demand for Sri Lanka from the 21st of April still shows that in context, demand for information and relating exposure in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks was significantly higher:



As a relative measure, we can estimate topics relating to the Easter Sunday Attacks had a 9x larger demand than any other topic relating to Sri Lanka during the period monitored.

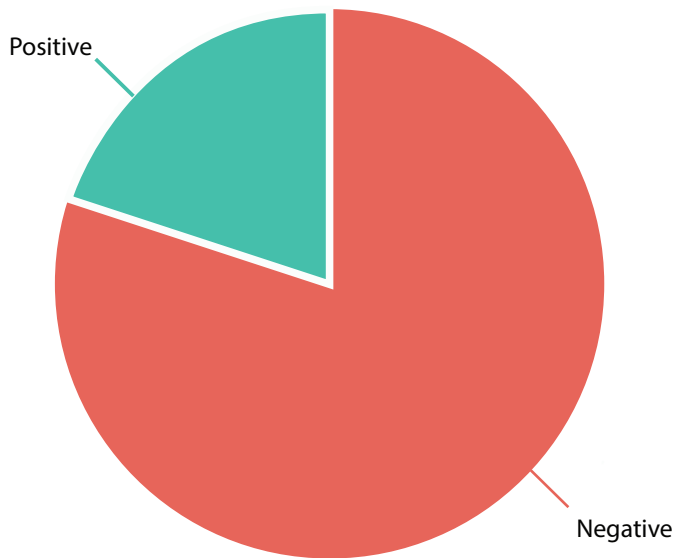
Online Conversations

Topics of conversation across content platforms such as social media, news sites, forums, blogs and similar also showed the Cricket World Cup as a leading topic of discussion in relation to Sri Lanka.

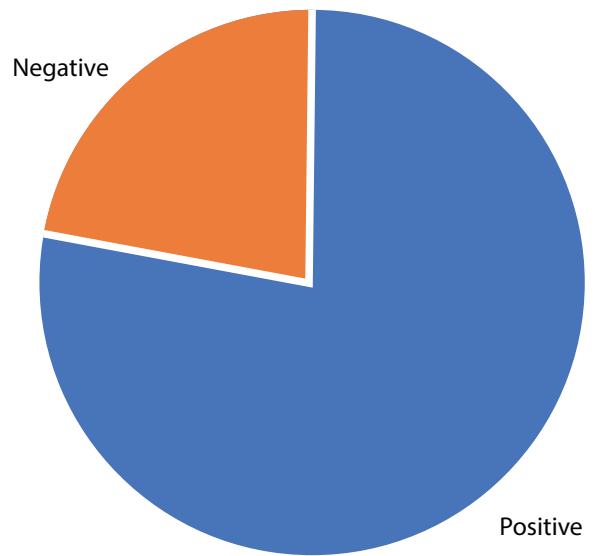


On Social Media, conversations primarily took place on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Sri Lanka’s surprise win over England on 21st June 2019 dwarfed all other topics of discussions with a sharp rise visible.

The overwhelmingly negative sentiment seen between 21st April to 15th May 2019 has shifted to more positive conversations.



21st April to 15th May 2019



16th May to 30th June 2019

Snapshot from sources



Source: www.youtube.com – Bright Side, 14th Amazing Facts About Sri Lanka You Won't Find Online – 18th June 2019



nations • [Follow](#)
Sri Lanka



nations "There's a spiritual battle raging in Sri Lanka between light and dark. It's evident that there's a strong desire for peace and unity, but glimpses of fear and hurt still flutter throughout the country. How does a culture that's experienced great amounts of unpredictable violence gain assurance in safety and stability?"

New on Nations: "Photo Essay: The Settling Dust of War in Sri Lanka"

By Catherine McGrath
[@catherinemcgrath](#)
Link in profile to view.

1w



nations [#srilanka](#) [#betterstories](#)



248 likes

JUNE 26

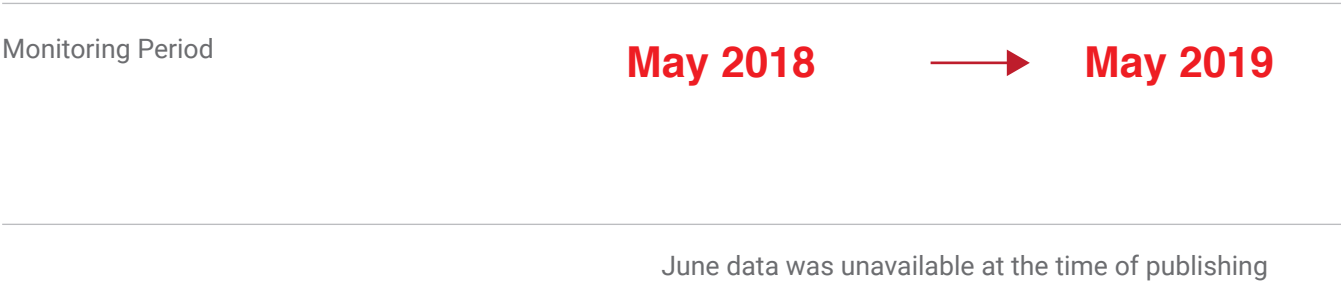
Add a comment...

[Post](#)

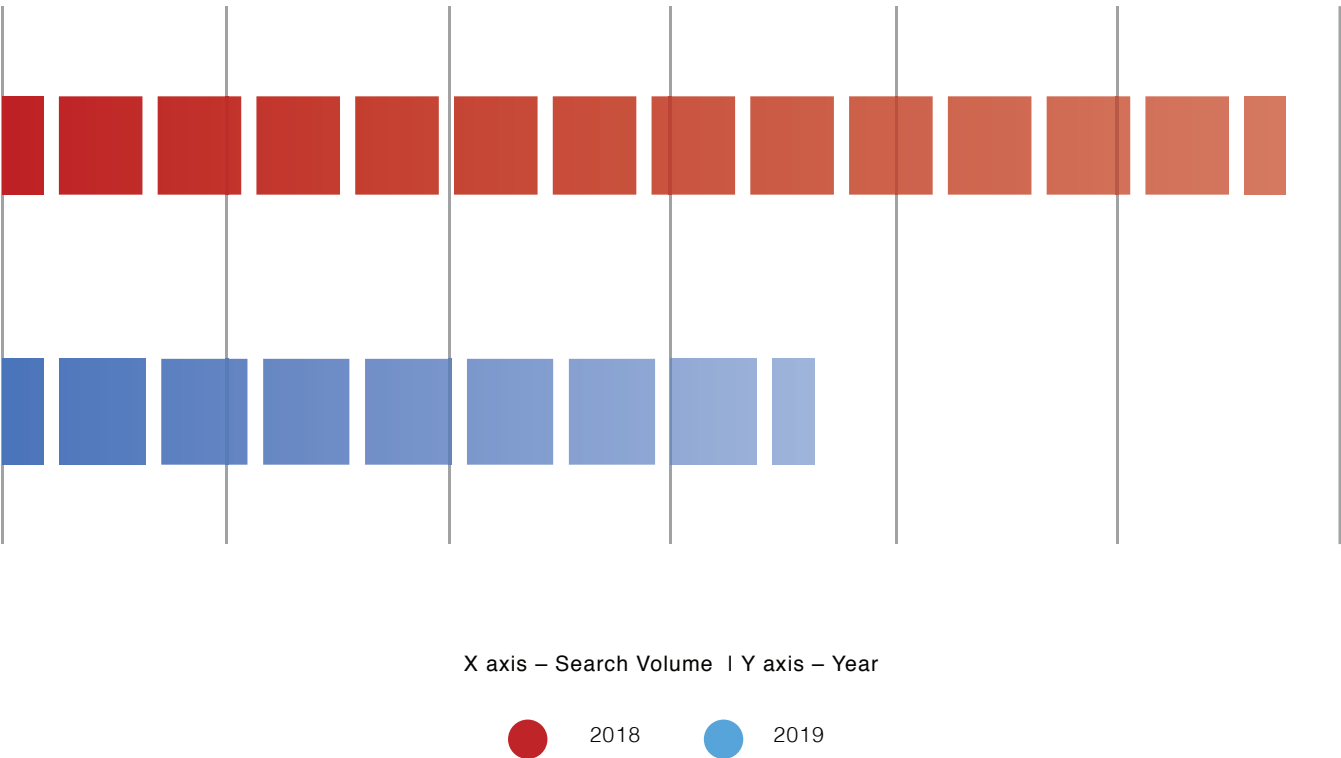
Source: www.instagram.com – Nations Media – 26th June 2019

Tourism Related Demand for Sri Lanka

Online demand as assessed through search terms were used to understand the possible variance in demand volume after the Easter Sunday Attacks. Monitored terms included permutations of 'hotels, holidays, tours, vacation, beaches, visit' and similar in relation to Sri Lanka.

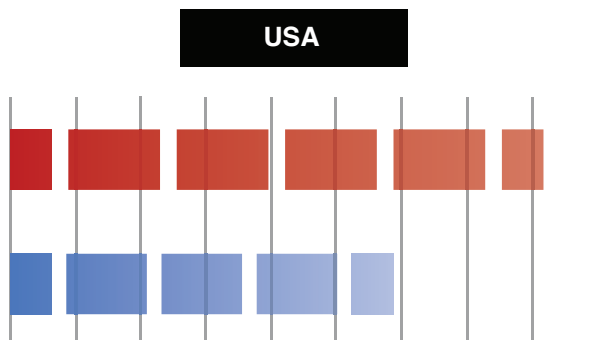


Global Demand (includes Sri Lanka)

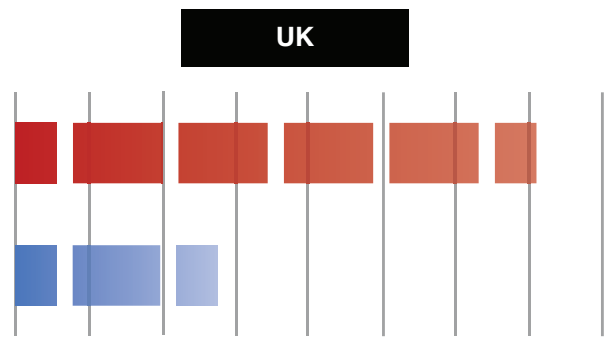


-37% decrease in demand for hospitality and tourism related information can be seen.

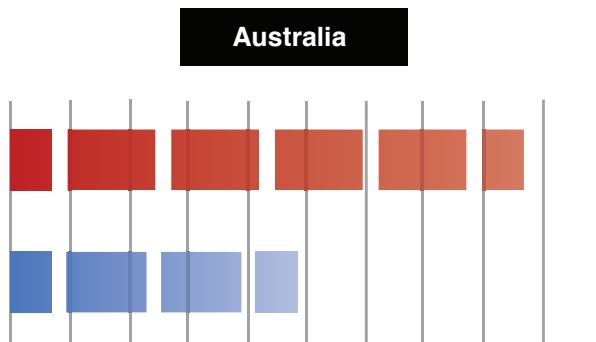
Demand from Key Source Markets



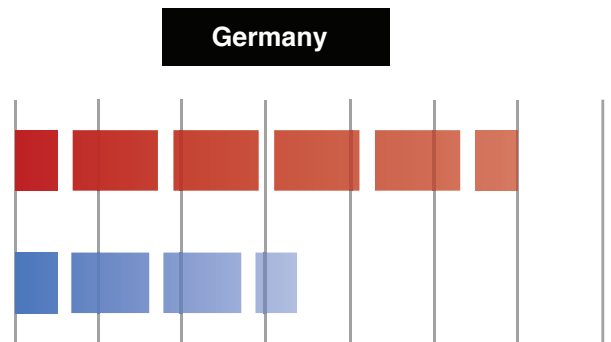
-28% variance year-on-year



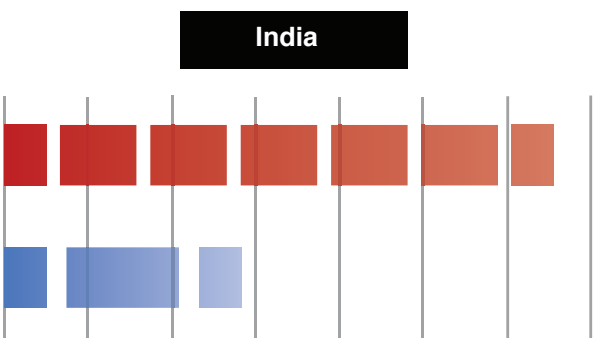
-61% variance year-on-year



-44% variance year-on-year



-44% variance year-on-year



-57% variance year-on-year

X axis – Search Volume | Y axis – Year

● 2018 ● 2019

Sri Lanka Safety and Travel Advisories

Monitoring Period

May 2018



June 2018

May 2019



June 2019

A review of safety related queries and topics online show a significant rise post the Easter Sunday Attacks. A similar rise in travel advisories to the country can also be seen.

Examples of Top Searches and Topics relating to safety in June 2019

Is it safe to travel to Sri Lanka?

Is it safe to travel to Sri Lanka right now?

Is November a good time to visit Sri Lanka?

Is Sri Lanka still safe to visit?

Is a trip to Sri Lanka in July advisable?

Is Colombo, Sri Lanka a safe place to visit?

Is Sri Lanka safe for women travelers?

Is it safe to travel to Sri Lanka for a summer vacation?

600% Increase

Sri Lanka + Safety
(estimated)

1,700% Increase

Sri Lanka + Travel Advisory
(estimated)

Destination Demand from Key Source Markets

Review period

May 2018



June 2018

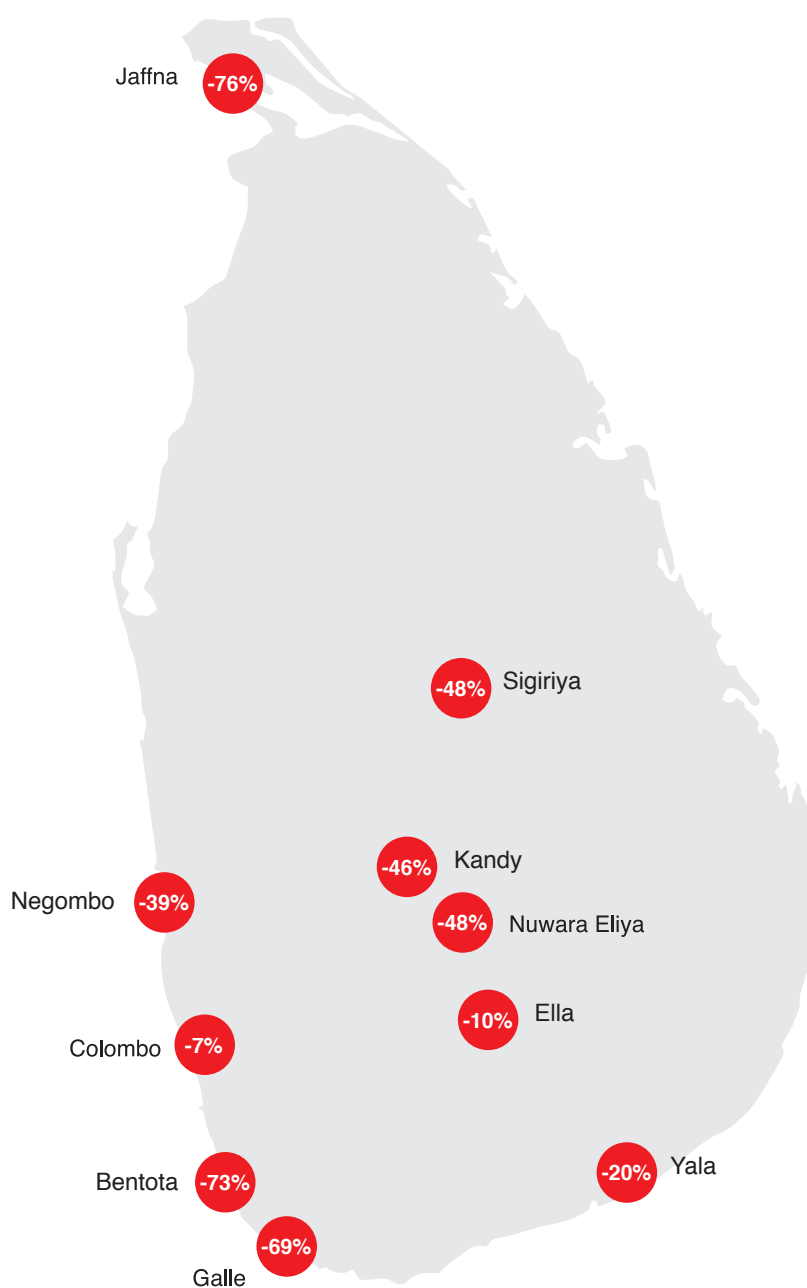
USA

May 2019



June 2019

Tourism related searches for ten popular tourist locales in Sri Lanka were reviewed to compare year-on-year the variance in demand at the destination level.



Destination Demand from Key Source Markets

Review period

May 2018



June 2018

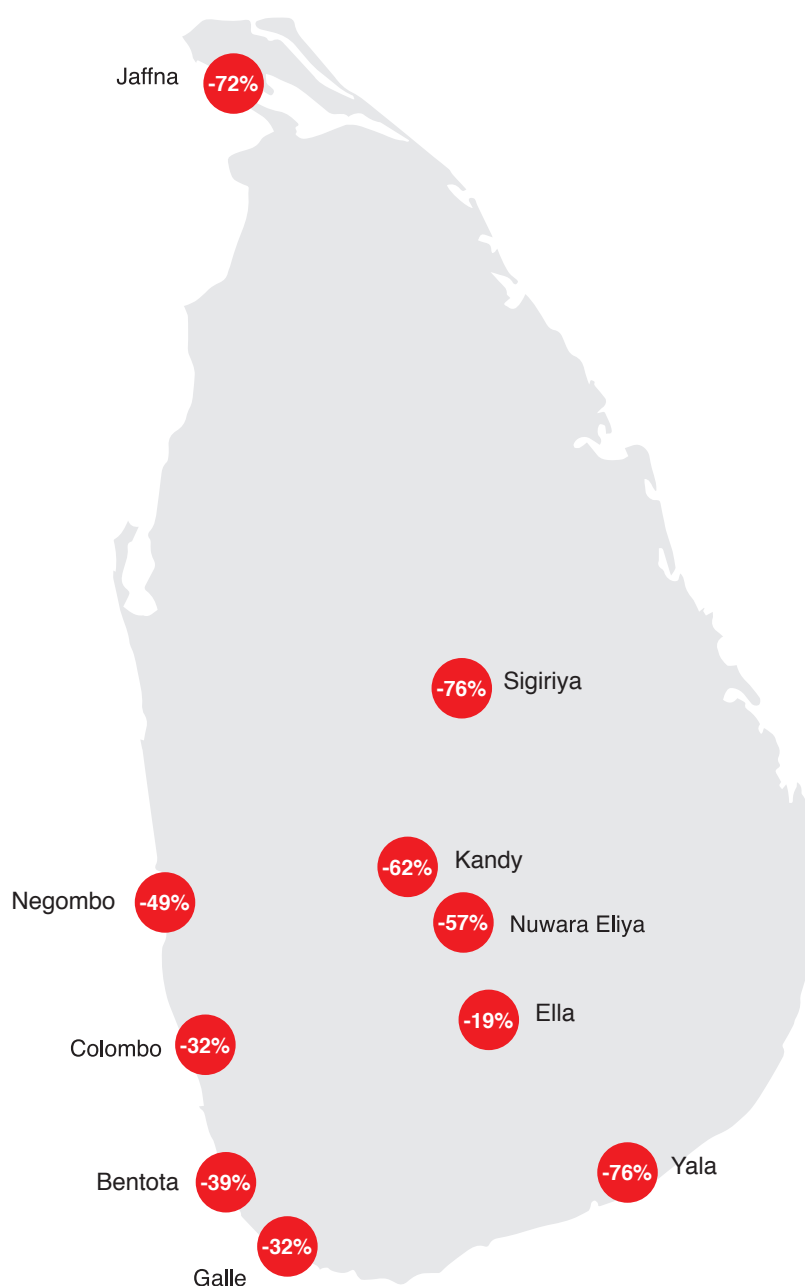
UK

May 2019



June 2019

Tourism related searches for ten popular tourist locales in Sri Lanka were reviewed to compare year-on-year the variance in demand at the destination level.



Destination Demand from Key Source Markets

Review period

May 2018



June 2018

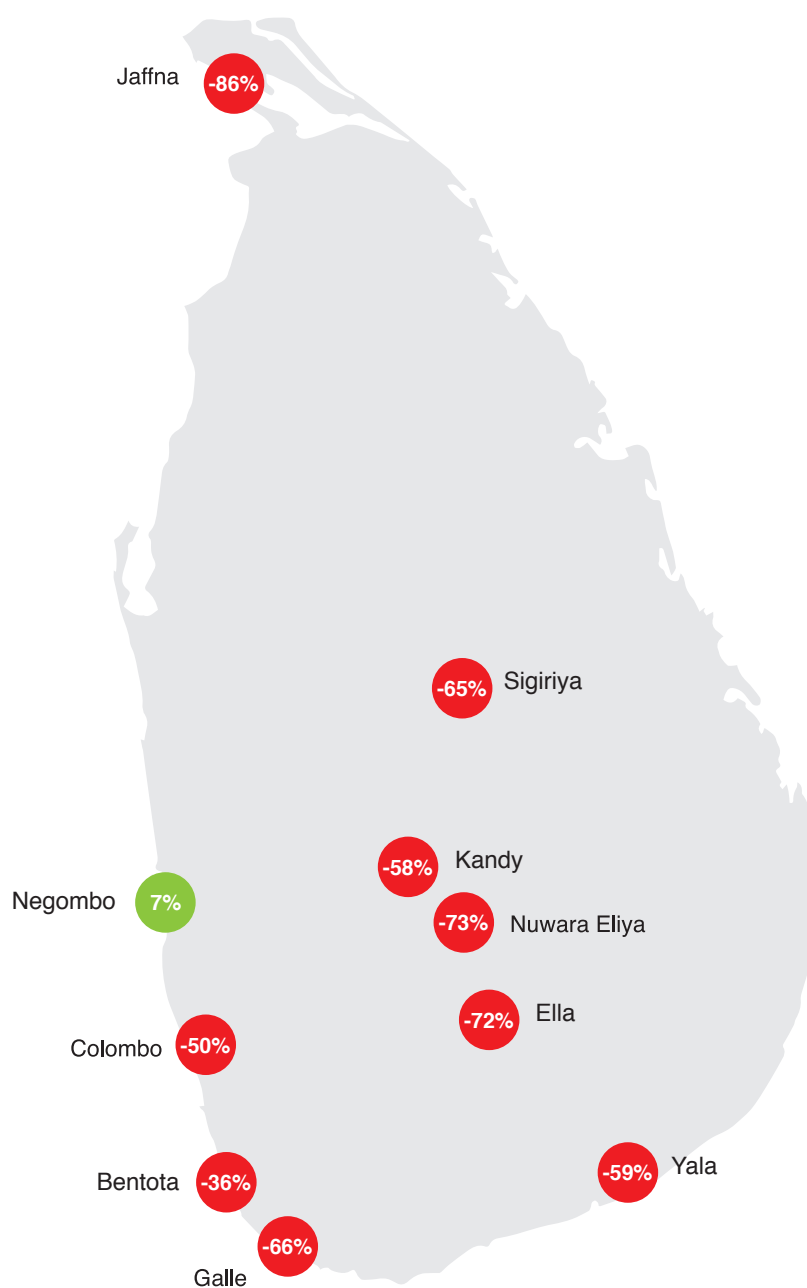
Australia

May 2019



June 2019

Tourism related searches for ten popular tourist locales in Sri Lanka were reviewed to compare year-on-year the variance in demand at the destination level.



Destination Demand from Key Source Markets

Review period

May 2018



June 2018

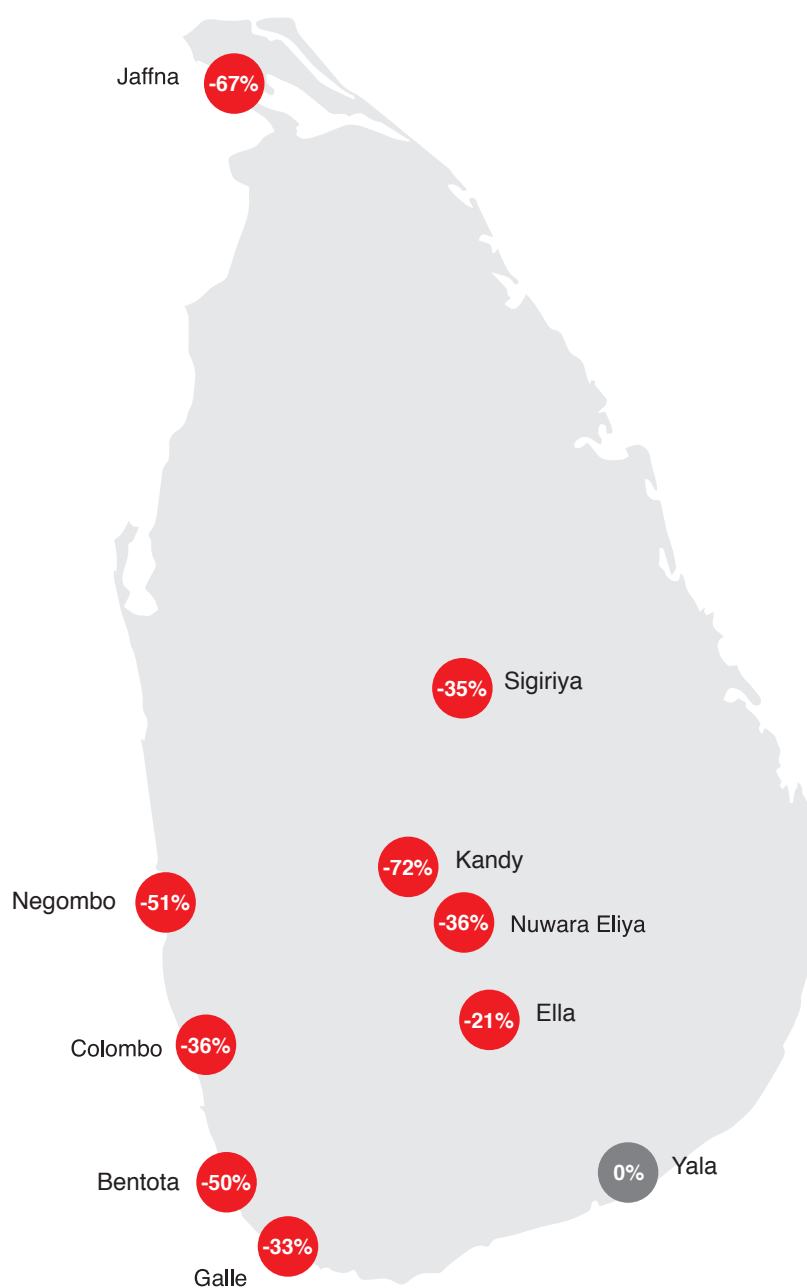
Germany

May 2019



June 2019

Tourism related searches for ten popular tourist locales in Sri Lanka were reviewed to compare year-on-year the variance in demand at the destination level.



Destination Demand from Key Source Markets

Review period

May 2018



June 2018

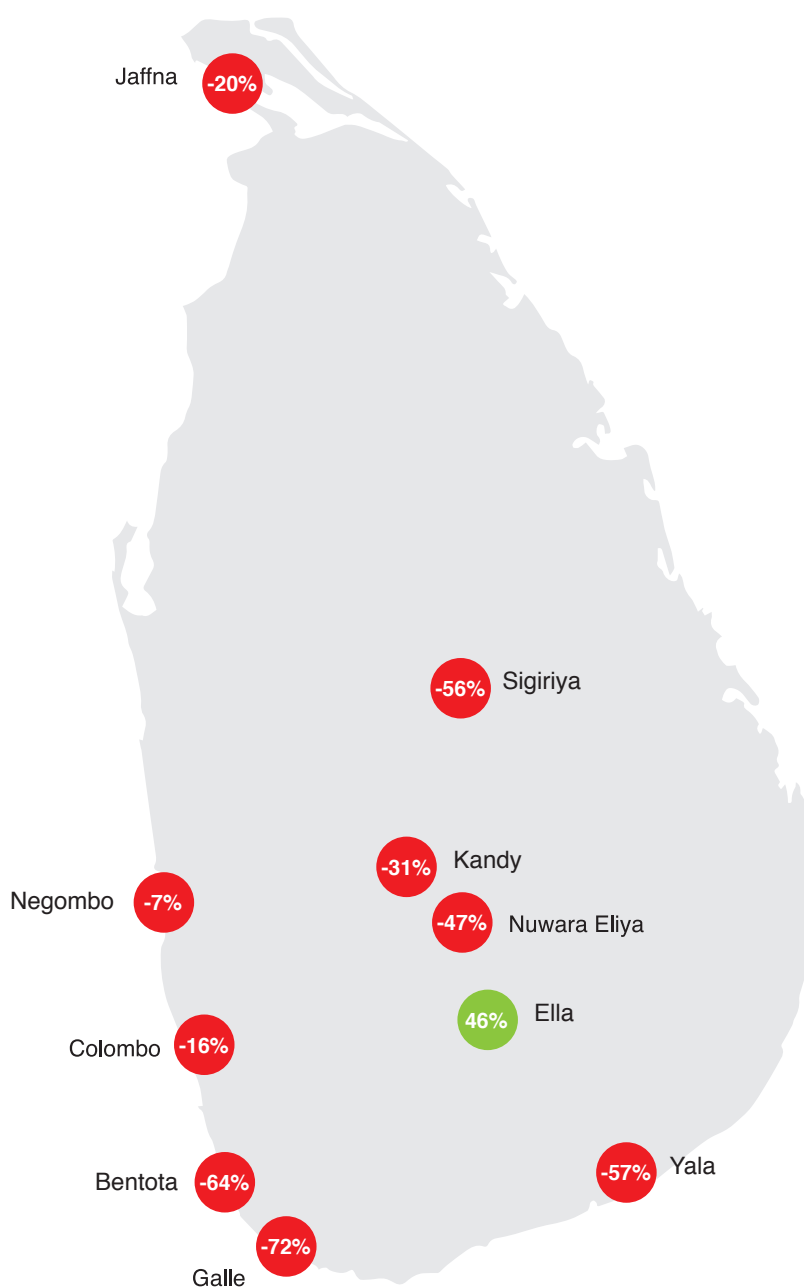
India

May 2019



June 2019

Tourism related searches for ten popular tourist locales in Sri Lanka were reviewed to compare year-on-year the variance in demand at the destination level.





Hotel Industry - Online Impact

The on-going impact on the Hotel Sector online was analyzed through an audit of hotel brand demand and rate search patterns. Key source markets were reviewed based on confirmed bookings through brand websites.

Online Brand Impact

The pattern in brand search volumes post the Easter Sunday Attacks as well as in comparison to 2018 were used to gauge impact. The influence of local promotions was also reviewed.

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. Of the 54 reviewed, 33 had available data from 2018 and were used for year-on-year comparisons.

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 the 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.

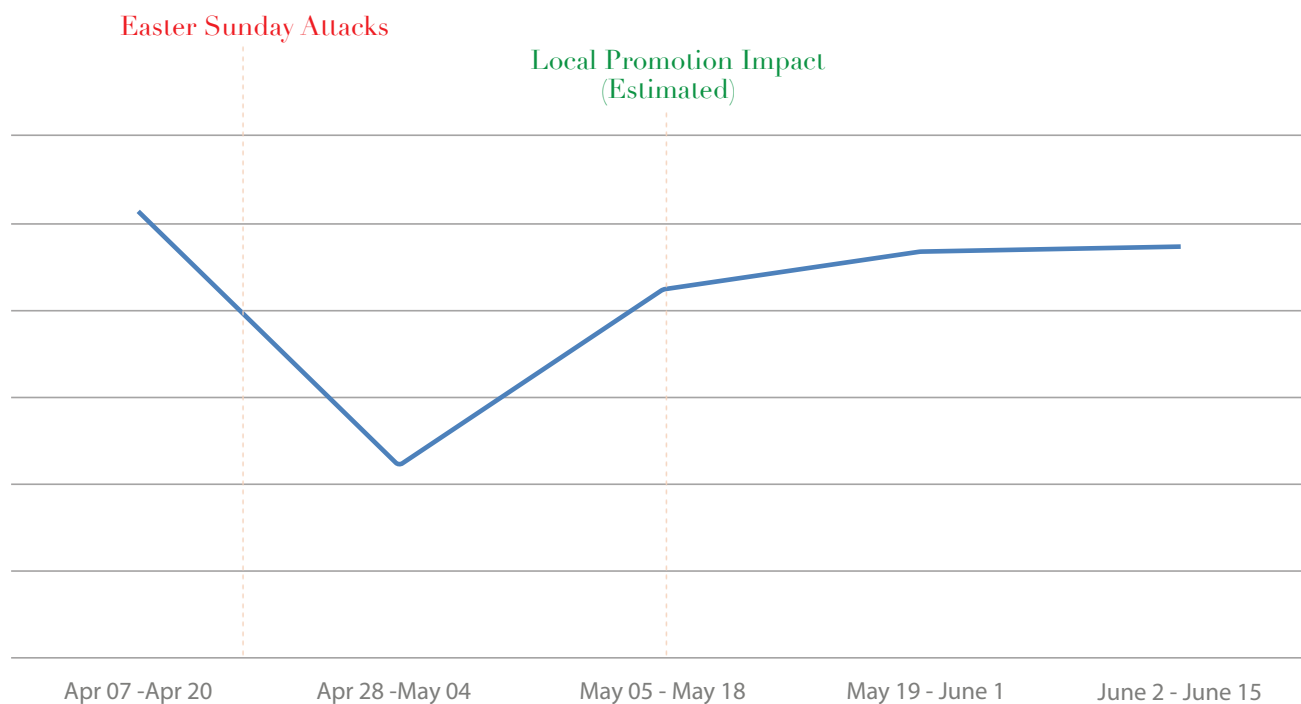
Note

Sri Lanka typically experiences a 'high' and 'low' season for tourist 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 in 2019 (including Sri Lanka)

A sample of 54 individual hotels (3 star and above), villas and boutique properties were used to understand the brand demand trend in 2019.



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

Brand Demand Data from 7th April to 15th June 2019.

The decline in demand outside of Sri Lanka was offset by local demand.

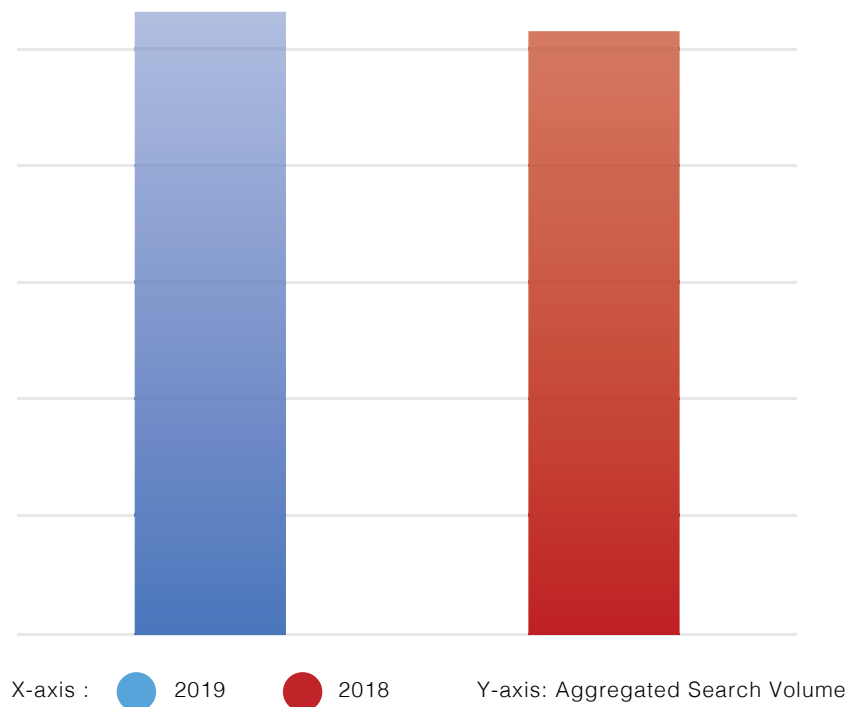
Brand Demand Trend 2018 vs 2019

Periods

15th May 2018 → 15th June 2018

15th May 2019 → 15th June 2019

An analysis of the total brand demand globally (including Sri Lanka) was reviewed to better understand the year-on-year variance. Surprisingly, an overall growth was seen in 2019.



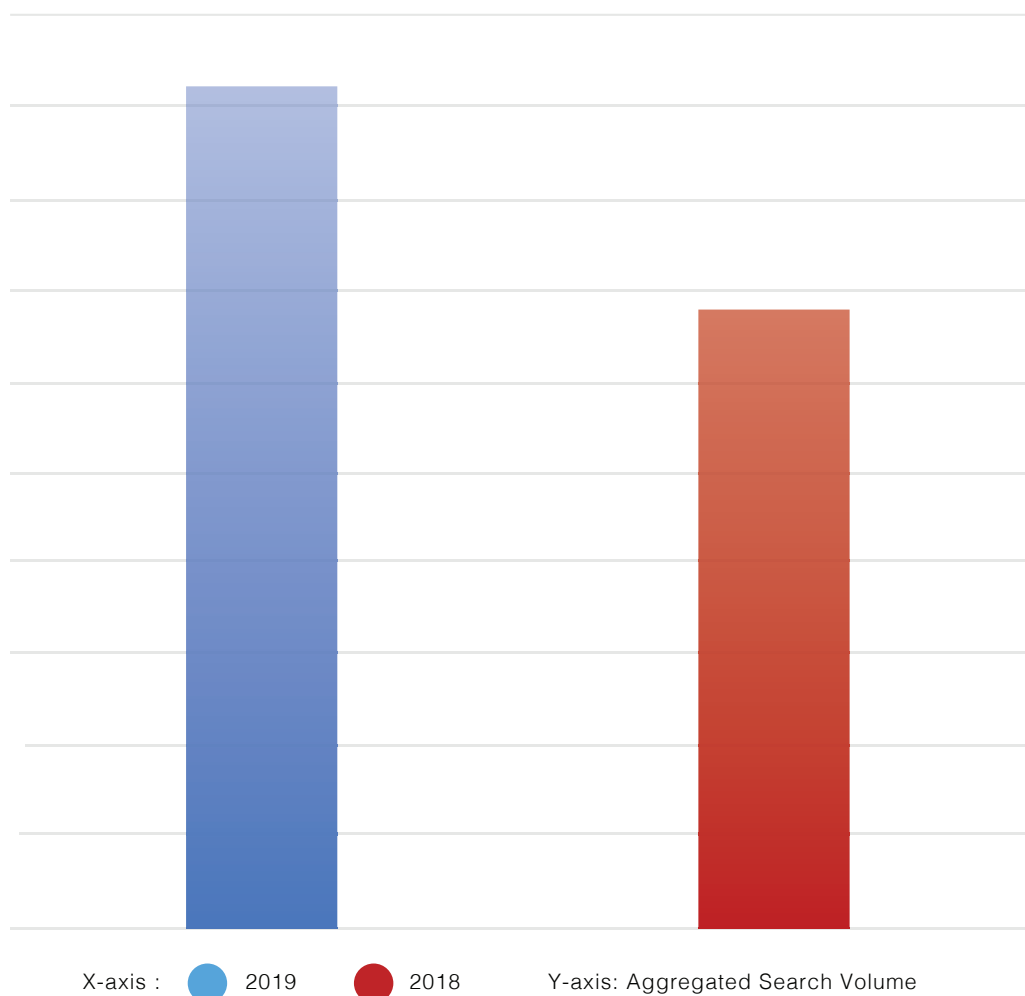
Brand Demand Data from 15th May to 15th June 2018 vs 2019.

A 4% increase in overall demand was seen.

Upon further analysis, the unexpected growth was due to a significant increase in local demand.

Quantifying Local Demand Impact

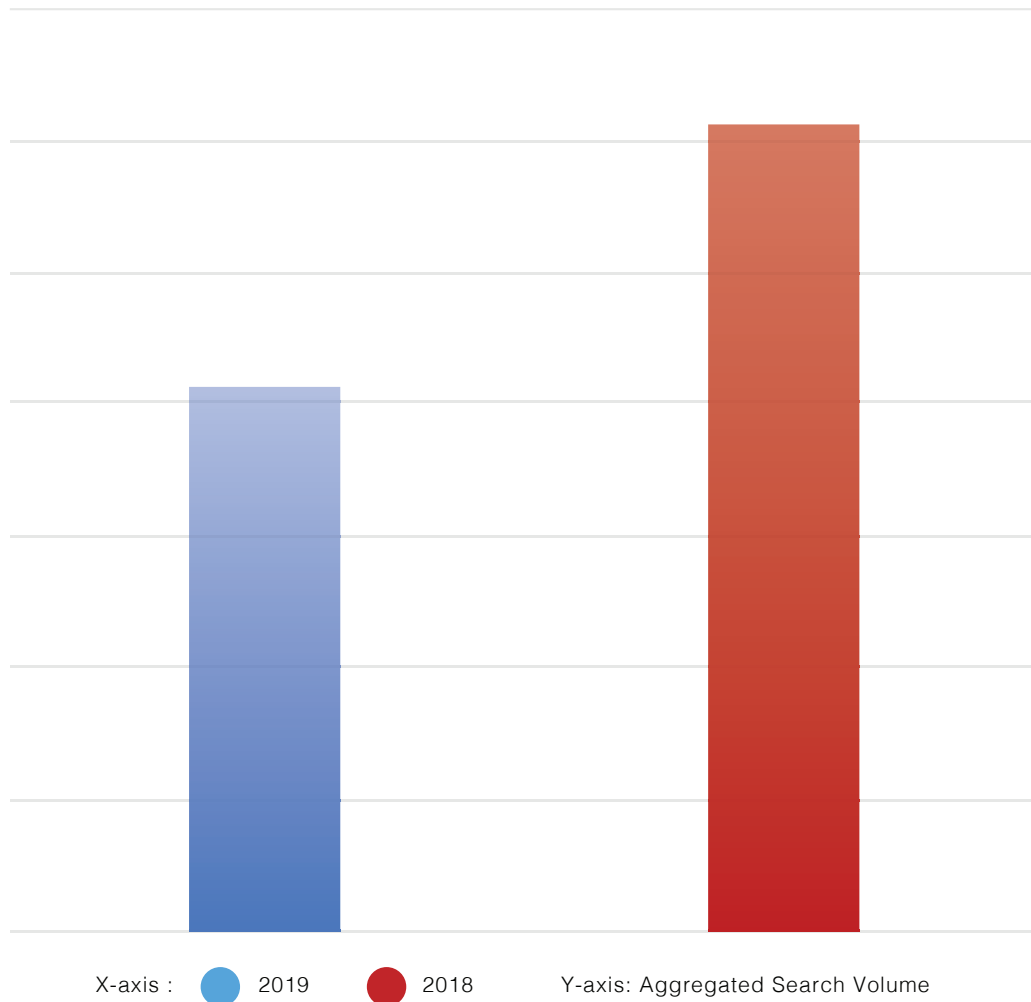
While the traditional off-peak season in Sri Lanka sees renewed focus on the local market, in 2019 post the Easter Sunday Attacks, aggressive discounting specifically targeting locals was seen online. The focus on local promotion shows a significant growth in brand demand.



Brand Demand Data only from Sri Lanka, from 15th May to 15th June 2018 vs 2019.

A 37% increase in overall demand can be seen year-on-year from Sri Lanka.

To quantify the variance in overseas brand demand, a review excluding Sri Lanka was also conducted.



Brand Demand Data from 15th May to 15th June 2018 vs 2019.

A 32% decline in overall demand can be seen globally, excluding Sri Lanka.

To quantify the variance in overseas brand demand, a review excluding Sri Lanka was also conducted.

Based on the above review, the 4% growth in overall brand demand seen comparing 15th May to 15th June 2018 to 2019, is as a result of greater visibility and incentives targeting the local market, which off-set the decline in overseas demand.

Demand Impact by District

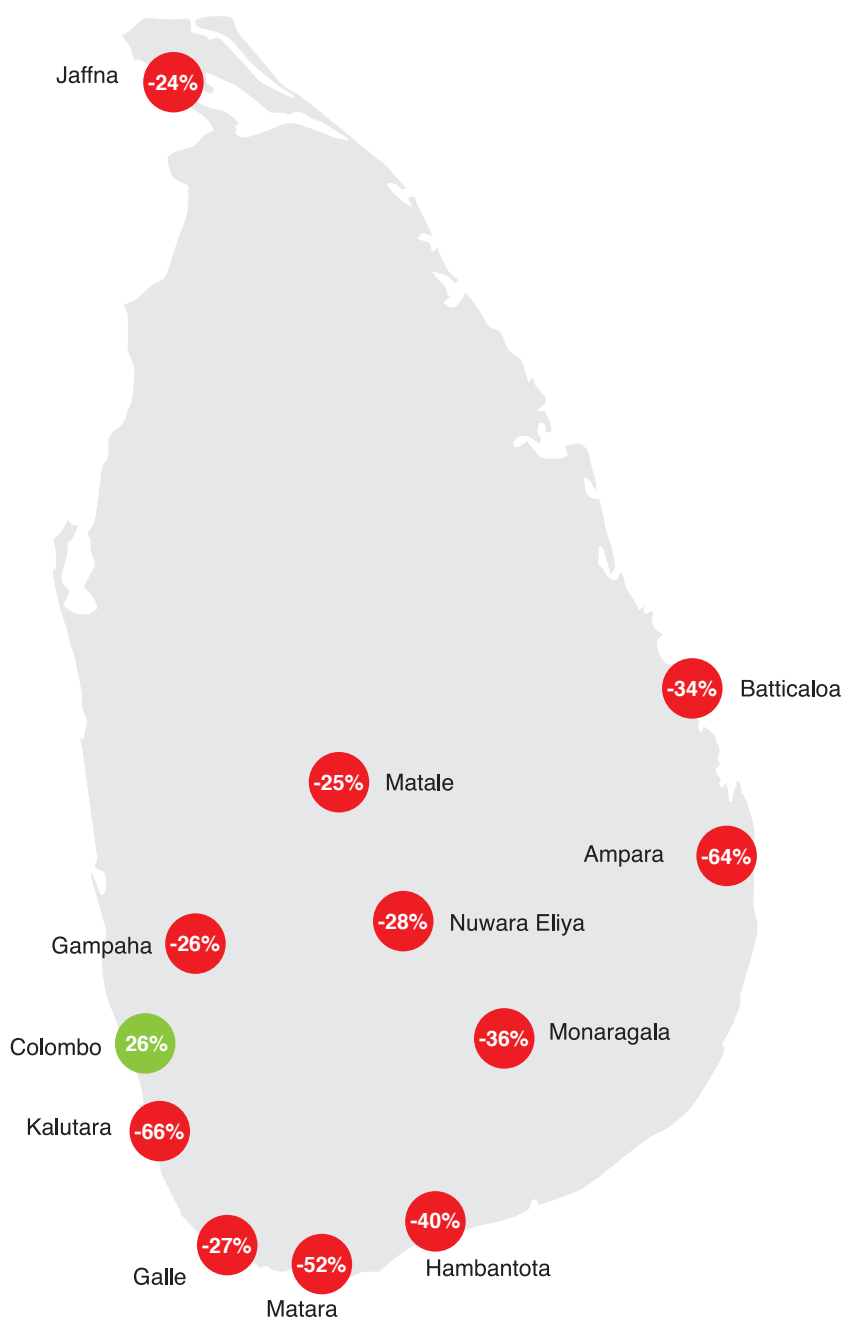
Periods

15th May 2018 → 15th June 2018
15th May 2019 → 15th June 2019

The overseas brand demand (excluding Sri Lanka) for properties in specific districts, from key source markets, were reviewed to better understand the year-on-year variance for a specific region in Sri Lanka.

Note

The properties reviewed are not evenly distributed among regions reviewed.



Online Booking Demand

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

Methodology

Of the 54 participating properties, 33 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.

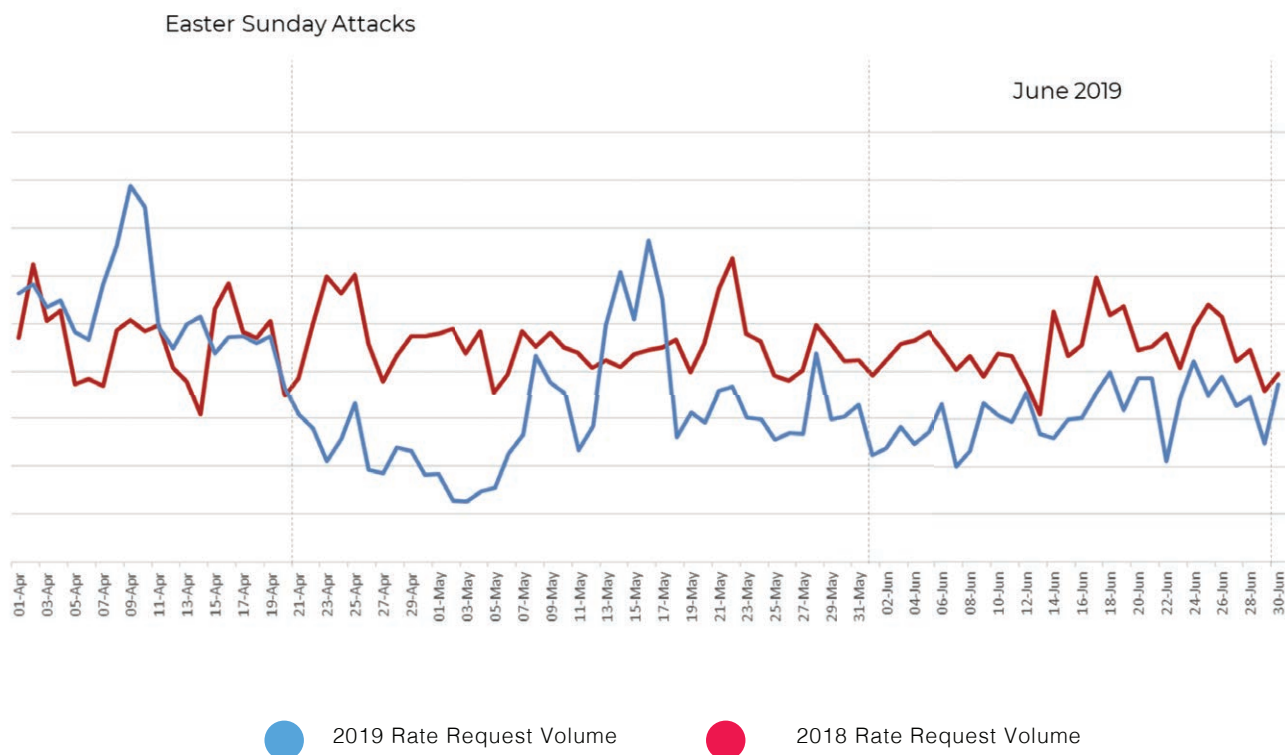
As most properties shifted focus to local promotions in the immediate aftermath, **statistics from Sri Lanka were removed** to offer a more accurate picture of non-Sri Lankan demand.

Booking Demand Volume Comparison 2018 vs 2019

Review Period

1st April 2018 → **30th June 2018**

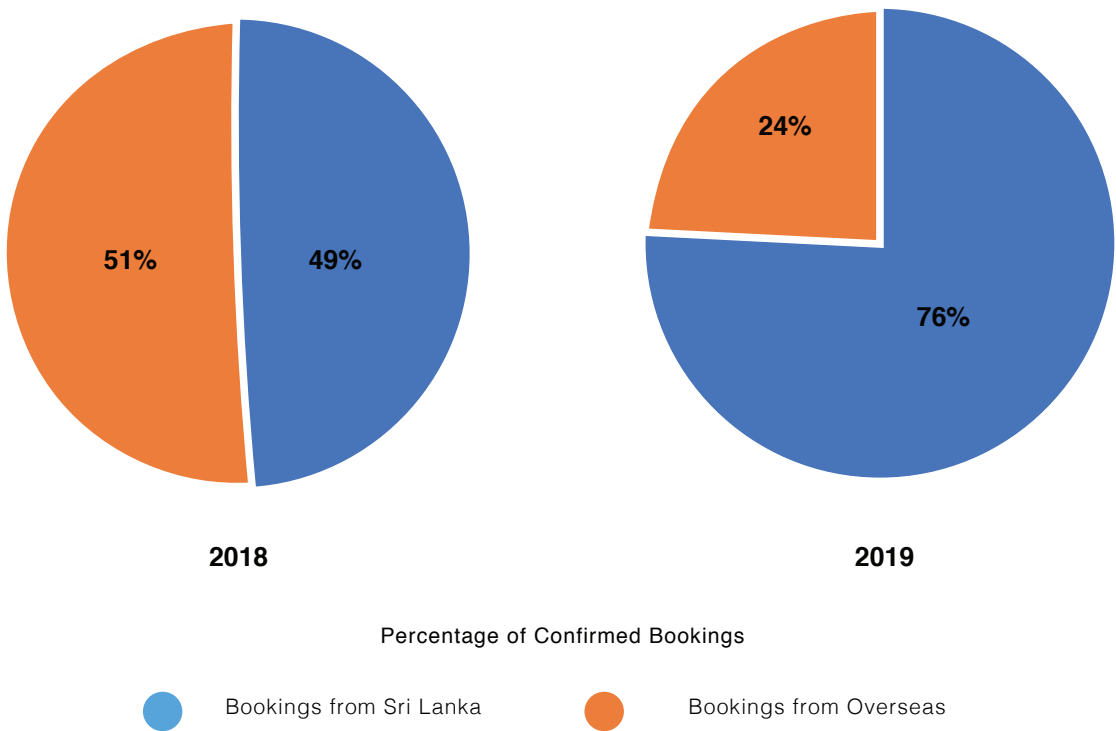
1st April 2019 → **30th June 2019**



- Prior to the Easter Sunday Attacks, the rate request volume from 1st April to 20th April 2019 was 14.5% higher than the same period in 2018.
- 21st April onwards, in the weeks that follow, a 55% drop in volume year-on-year was visible.
- Towards the latter stages of May 2019, the deficit in rate search volume between 2019 and 2018 lessens and can be construed as a sign of recovery.
- June 2019 vs. 2018, the rate search volume deficit is 30% in 2019. An Improvement compared to the steeper drop immediately after the attacks.
- The last 7 days in June show a further trend towards normalization, a 22% deficit is seen in 2019 compared to 2018.

Online Confirmed Bookings Analysis

Review Period	1 st June 2018	→	30 th June 2018
	1 st June 2019	→	30 th June 2019



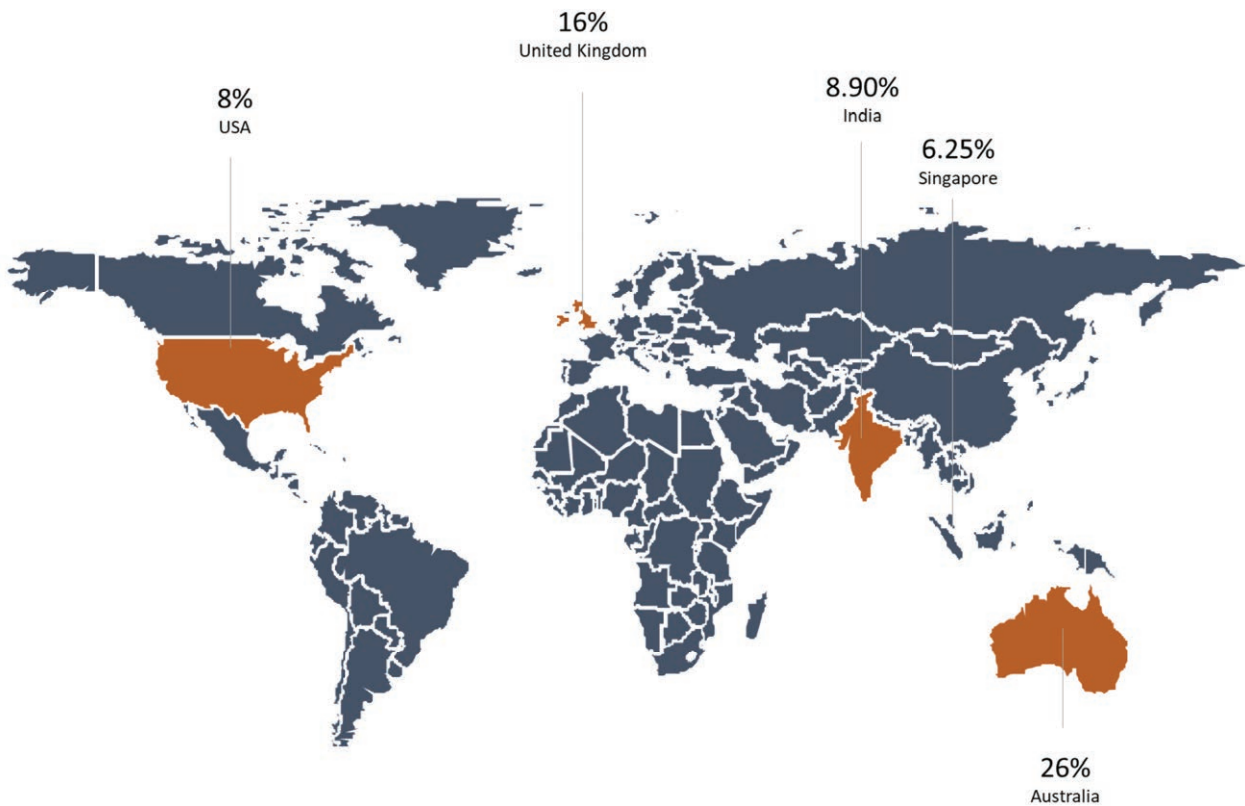
Percentage Decline of Booking Demand: 2018 vs 2019

- In 2018, 51% of confirmed online bookings in June were from overseas.
- In 2019, only 24% were from overseas.
- In terms of volume, in June 2018, USA accounted for 18% of all overseas bookings, in 2019 it was 8%.
- Comparing the actual number of confirmed bookings from USA in 2019 vs. 2018, a 68% drop is visible in 2019.
- The total number of confirmed online bookings from Sri Lanka increased by 146% in 2019, compared to 2018.
- Likely a result of the aggressive discounting and local promotions seen online.

Overseas Booking Markets Online

Review Period	1 st June 2018	→	30 th June 2018
	1 st June 2019	→	30 th June 2019

Confirmed bookings online in June 2019 (booking period) from overseas markets. The booking volume is represented as a percentage of all overseas bookings (excluding Sri Lanka).



Country Contribution Percentage of Total Overseas Confirmed Bookings

26% of bookings recorded online were from Australia in June 2019.

Analysis

By Niranka T. Perera | CEO, Antyra Solutions (Private) Limited.

The two key takeaways from this report are,

- A) A negative variance in demand for Sri Lanka is still clearly visible when comparing 2019 to 2018.
- B) In the same light, the reduction in the year-on-year deficit in June, for both brand demand and booking demand from the properties surveyed, can be construed as positive signs in the return to normalcy.

The foreign news cycle has moved on with most conversations online including Social Media, discussing Sri Lanka's participation at the 2019 Cricket World Cup. Overall, the positivity in conversations, especially the smaller subset relating to tourism is encouraging.



Sri Lanka seems to show the fastest return to normalcy with the deficit in 2019 at 15%, compared to 2018



Potential tourists though are still concerned about safety and the status of travel advisories. From May to June, a clear reduction in safety related online demand relating to Sri Lanka can't be seen. As such, safety seems to be very much a personal decision and it is likely we'll see continued research on safety by potential tourists.

The largest drops in online demand (measured through search volume) year-on-year for Sri Lanka and popular tourist locales within the country are seen from the UK and India. However, analyzing confirmed bookings from these two markets in June 2019, show a negligible difference compared to 2018. What this could mean is that early signs of normalization may translate as those who had already made plans to travel following through, while the significant variance in online demand in researching Sri Lanka may signify an impact at the top of the travel consumer funnel, with those considering a travel destination choosing to forgo Sri Lanka. We will continue to monitor this variance to see if this assumption holds true as the volume of time bound data is too limited to draw concrete conclusions.

The US was among the last key source markets to reduce the severity of their travel advisories and as expected, a 68% drop in confirmed bookings can be seen in June 2019, compared to 2018. The US remains a top five online booking market though for hotel brand websites in 2019.

Of the 10 tourist locales reviewed to better understand destination demand from key source markets, Ella, Sri Lanka seems to show the fastest return to normalcy with the deficit in 2019 at 15%, compared to 2018. Other destinations showing a positive recovery trend are Negombo and Colombo, while Jaffna currently shows the highest drop in demand.

As time progresses and government entities, NGOs and the private sector continue their efforts to re-build Sri Lanka's tourism image, we hope to see further improvements in the recovery trends.



Help us Improve

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.

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)
- Gestination (Antyra's Booking Engine Platform)

* * *

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