

Post-crisis recovery management of tourism: Lesson Learnt from the Easter Sunday attack in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

International tourism has evolved into one of the largest global economic sectors, contributing significantly to many national and local economies. However, the crises have caused much loss and damage over the last few decades, burdening the tourism industry. On April 21, 2019, the day of Easter Sunday, Sri Lanka experienced a series of unexpected attacks. It caused many problems and challenges to the tourism industry. This study attempts to understand respondents who are involved in the tourism industry's lived experiences of the Sunday easter attack and their involvement in recovery. The qualitative research method, particularly the phenomenological approach, was adopted to collect and analyse data through the lens of the stakeholder theory. Senior managers representing the different tourism industry sectors were purposively approached and interviewed. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that the easter Sunday attack negatively influenced the number of tourist arrivals and experiences. However, a well-designed crisis management plan under the control of the official authority can minimise the risk and reduce the negative impact of the incident. Therefore, this study presents an innovative integrated model that could be used as a crisis management plan to restore the tourism industry.

Keywords: *Disaster, Easter Sunday attack, Recovery process, Tourism, Phenomenology, Stakeholder theory*

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Introduction

Tourism is the most economically important industry internationally. During the past decades, the travel and tourism sector contributed significantly to national economies of 9.8% of the world's gross domestic product in 2017 and one out of eleven jobs generated from the tourism sector worldwide (Brown et al. 2018). Moreover, it has enormously contributed to developing countries, creating employment, stimulating regional development, and providing the best way of earning foreign exchange (Fernando, 2016; Sausmarez, 2004).

Sri Lanka is a thriving tourism destination with a momentous geographical location since it has located in the Indian Ocean on the central air and sea route between Europe and the Far East. It is the central support to the country's positioning as a global logistic hub (Fernando et al. 2016). Moreover, Sri Lanka is world-famous for tourism, not only for its location but for its many other unique, glamorous, and stunning features. Some of them are beaches around the island shining with bright blue, coastal cities, comfortable climate, UNESCO world heritage sites and historical rich Buddhist culture, national park and wildlife, tea gardens and sceneries with misty clouds, beautiful waterfalls, apart from this, valuable natural resources gem, pearls, ivory, spices have given further strength to the features of this beautiful islands (Fernando et al., 2016).

The tourism industry in Sri Lanka has become the third-largest export earner in the economy after remittance and textiles and garments (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2018). Looking at the last five years, the number of visitors has grown to never seen before, showing more than an average of 22% year on year, of which 80% to 90% were visitors coming to Sri Lanka to spend their holidays. In 2015, 1.8 million international visitors came to Sri Lanka, stayed an average of 10 days, and generated an estimated US \$ 2.98 billion. In 2016 it was over 2 billion and generated an income was US\$ 3.5 billion (Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs, 2016). During the year 2018, tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka showed 2,333,796, representing a 10.3% increase compared to 2017, whereas the number of nights spent by the international tourist was 25,205,000 showing a growth of 9.3% compared to the average duration of 10.8 nights (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2018). With the increase in tourist arrivals, foreign exchange earnings from the tourism sector have indicated a growth of 15.9% of the total foreign earnings in 2018, compared to the 14.8% in the previous year.

Many scholars have identified that this industry is most sensitive and vulnerable to crises and disasters (Brown et al., 2018; Becken & Kennet, 2013; Fernando, 2016). Sausmarez (2004) reviewed that international tourism cares about its safety; hence, it can be developed only within a secure environment free from danger. Furthermore, it heavily depends on the visitor's perception of safety, security, and prestige. Thus, the impact of the disasters and the crises are more significant (Fernando 2016). Visitors want to make their travel experience more enjoyable. When the destination is unsafe and insecure, joy is replaced by fear (Saoudi, 2006). Therefore when there is a risky situation in travel (Huang et al., 2008) and there is a reduction in visitor arrivals, a fall in employment, decreasing the revenue of tourism institutions and the government, and eventually decline the investments as well (Fernando, 2016).

In recent years due to the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures and populations, crises and natural disasters have become mainly of international importance (Sausmarez, 2007). Washington terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, the Bali bomb in 2002, tsunami in 2004, Katherine flood 1998, bush fire in Australia in 2002, health-related disasters SARS 2003, bird flu in 2003, an economic crisis in Asia 1997 and Turkey 2001 (Okuyama, 2018) were some examples which crisis and disasters have badly affected the tourism industry. Jiang et al. (2019) revealed that in 2018 there were 281 natural disasters worldwide, resulting in 10 373 deaths, 61.7 million affected people and the United States Dollars 160 billion in damage to the world economy.

According to Sausmarez (2007), a crisis usually occurs suddenly and the period after the crisis needs more attention to recover. A delay in the recovery process usually has significant economic implications. Although the tourism industry is unsafe to the crisis, this sector is relatively resilient as long as there are no severe damages. Gurtner (2006) empathises with the inadequate preparation and implementation of an effective disaster management system facing the difficulties for the industry resilience and recessions at tourism destinations, given that the destinations lack in capacity to react to the negative situations in the industry. Therefore, to continue with the productiveness of tourism, the government and the relevant industry stakeholders must attempt to cover the tourism sector from sudden changes and their adverse impact (Gurtner, 2006).

On April 21 2019, Easter Sunday, Sri Lanka experienced a series of unexpected incidents when terrorists launched suicide attacks on three churches and three luxurious hotels. The innocent, peaceful reputation built after the end of nearly thirty years of civil war (Fernando, 2016), the popular tourist destination of Sri Lanka, was destroyed within one second. For this attack, Islamic terrorist

suicide bombings were used to target three churches and three luxury hotels in the commercial capital, Colombo, in Sri Lanka, claiming more than 250 lives and injuring another 500 or more innocent people, nearly 40 foreigners were among the dead. The losses and damages of this incident were huge not only in terms of human lives but in terms of infrastructure and monetary value. The incident was broadcasted around the world soon after it happened. Many countries issued travel advisory notifications stating the unsafe situation in Sri Lanka, giving visitors away from the country; hence Sri Lanka suffered declining tourist arrivals and associated revenues. The hotel industry and its employees were mainly affected due to this incident. Thousands of employees, either unemployed or under employment contracts, were not continued (Barbe et al., 2018; Kefan & Liu, 2014). In this setting, this study explores how the Sri Lankan tourism sector struggled after the Easter Sunday attack and the strategies and actions adopted to recover the industry.

Literature Review

Defining Crisis Management is problematic

Past literature proved no universally accepted definition of crisis (Wang and Ritchie, 2010). Crisis and disaster are very similar. However, it differs from each other in the root course of the problem (Faulkner, 2001; Miller and Ritchie, 2003). Faulkner (2001) has explained that a crisis occurs due to the incompetence of management structures and practices or failure to adapt to change. Huang et al. (2008) noted that a crisis is an unexpected incident that occurs due to a failure of the management concerning future events with or without human involvement. Faulkner (2001) has explained that the case of a disaster is a situation where a community faces a sudden, unpredictable incident over which it has little control. At the same time, a disaster is a risky situation generated outside the organisation. Moreover, Wang and Ritchie (2012) examined whether the impact of the crisis could be negative or positive, resulting in a turning point for the company.

With the expansion of the crisis and the disasters at many popular tourism destinations, scholars have equal growth in various relevant aspects, but the strategic disaster management aspect remains (Gurtner 2016). Furthermore, the tourism industry is interdependent because of globalisation; hence, a crisis or disaster in one part of the world can considerably impact the other. For example, the Gulf War of 1991 and the Iraq conflict of 2003 are supportive incidents

(Ritchie, 2004). Therefore, researchers argue that this situation pressures policy and decision-makers to consider the impact of crises and disasters and develop a disaster recovery system to protect the industry and society (Jcu, 2014).

Post-crisis recovery management in the tourism industry

There are few scholars available to identify the recovery process of the tourism industry but in different incidents. Okuyama (2018) has aimed to examine the applicability of the contingent behaviour method for analysing dynamic processors and efficient policies in tourism demand recovery. Ritchie (2004) has discussed the strategic and holistic approach to crisis management for the tourism industry, whereas Gurtner (2006) has examined the recovery process of the tourism industry, considering the Bali destination as a whole. The study by Crawford (2012) aimed to analyse the recovery of the Balinese and Egyptian tourism industries. Another study has been done by Jcu (2014) on the recent crisis in reliant tourist destinations. Paraskevas (2013) has developed a baseline strategy for terrorist attacks. However, every tourism institution has faced a unique disaster or crisis (Mair et al., 2016). These destinations will recover from the challenges and adverse situations more efficiently and effectively if it has suitably developed tourism disaster planning. However, since there is a lack of recovery management system practice in the industry, the recovery is slow, the available practices are not applicable generally, and each is unique to that specific scenario and context (Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2004).

In recent years crises occurring from human activities have increased and arising more frequently (Sawalha et al., 2013). Among them, the hotel sector has faced severe terrorist attacks, including the 2003 Marriott bombing in Jakarta, the 2004 attack in Taba Hilton Peninsula, the 2005 Triple bombing of Grant Hyatt, in 2008 Taj and Oberoi hotel in Jakarta, the 2011 Intercontinental hotel attack in Kabul Afghanistan, in 2009 Peal continental hotel in Pakistan are some of them (Paraskevas, 2013). In addition, Wang and Ritchie (2012) have observed other terrorist attacks that have negatively impacted the tourism sector, such as the 2008 Taj mahal hotel attack in Mumbai and the 2009 hotel Shammo attack in Somalia. Another study by Saoudi (2006) has examined the impact and the recovery process of the three suicide bomb attacks on three international hotels, the Grand Hyatt, Radisson SAS, and Days Inn, in Jordan, killing 57 people and injuring more than 12 people including the foreign visitors. This incident and the middle Eastern counties have also faced many crises, including the continuous Palestine-Israel conflict, the Gulf war, and the Iraq war.

Researchers revealed that since political, economic and security problems surround Jordan, the government is facing difficulties in providing enough funds, and the absence of a crisis management plan has made the situation more adverse.

As discussed above, various crises and disasters in tourism have proved that the tourism industry is susceptible to safety and security (Farmaki et al., 2019; Isaac & Velden, 2018). Gurtner (2006) empathises that inadequate preparation and implementation of an effective disaster management system face difficulties for the industry resilience and recessions at tourism destinations given that, therefore, the destinations are lacking in captivity to react to the negative situations in the industry. Moreover, it argues that safety and security have had a substantial impact on visitors' decision-making as well. As a result, Sausmarez (2007) noted that delayed regaining the original status might cause adverse economic implications. Therefore, it is understandable to have a disaster management plan for every destination and organisation in the tourism industry. So far, the scholarly articles reviewed have explained the post-recovery processes applied by the destinations after experiencing the incidents. Faulkner (2001) revealed that a common strategy could be developed to cope with similar events in the future by studying past events of the crisis and disasters, their recovery processes implemented and evaluating the effectiveness of those responses.

The necessity of Developing a Common Framework

Every destination's tourism disaster plan must understand the vulnerability's broader background. Tew et al. (2008) noted that organisations with strategic management processes have better capability to face uncertain environments. It further argues that companies with a strategic management process face sudden changes more successfully than those without such a plan. According to Miller and Ritchie (2003), a disaster management plan with strategic planning will enable the destination or an organisation to reduce risk, and time wastage, avoid poor resource management, and reduce the impact of the incident. This was supported by Ritchie (2004) in his study, revealing the impotence of the disaster recovery plan with a strategic management view for an industry like tourism which is often affected by external changes, crises, and disasters.

Over the past decades, many scholars have introduced various frameworks that can be used in the recovery process of the tourism industry. As noted by Miller and Ritchie (2003), the first tourism-specific disaster management life cycle

framework was developed by Fink (1986) with four stages of the crisis life cycle such as recognition, readiness, response and recovery. It was further developed by Roberts (1994), and based on these two frameworks, Faulkner (2001) developed the first tourism-specific disaster management framework, which was later applied to the Katharina flood in Australia. Faulkner (2001) has noted several failures in managing and responding to crises and disasters in the tourism industry. Consequently, it has influenced to development of a standard model of the disaster management plan to cope with future incidents. However, researchers empathised that reviewing past scholars in this regard has given two interrelated deficiencies (Filimonau and Perez, 2018). The first one has given that there is no conceptual and theoretical foundation for analysing disasters and formulating a disaster management plan; secondly, there have been few systematic analyses of past events that can be used as a base.

Theoretical framework

This paper uses stakeholder theory to extend the current theoretical body of literature to describe the roles of stakeholders involved in disaster management recovery. According to Ritchie (2004), stakeholders are those groups or organisations that can affect or are affected by the achievement of organisational goals. According to Ritchie (2004), considering the tourism industry, employees, managers, and shareholders are considered the internal stakeholders, whereas the visitors, industry (hoteliers, tour agents, etc.), government agencies, and the general public are considered external stakeholders. Among them, the government, tourism institutions, tour operators, and entrepreneurs are considered the significant parties that are directly related to the tourism development initiatives and, therefore, can affect or are affected by the decisions and activities concerning those initiatives (Waligo et al., 2013). Hence, understanding stakeholder collaboration is vital for better recovery outcomes and helps restore the industry faster. This study further revealed that stakeholders play an essential role in the tourism industry; with the collaboration of the different stakeholders, the industry as a whole stand to gain significant returns in the long run.

The impact of the crisis and the disasters are enormous and usually negatively affect the destination since the occurrences of those incidents are hard to predict (Jiang & Ritchie, 2017). It further stated that stakeholder collaboration is vital concerning responding to and recovering from disasters and crises. Orchiston

(2011) argues that the tourism industry comprises a complex mix of various stakeholders. Hence, this industry depends on the interdependence of its networks, such as restaurants, transportation, accommodations, and attractions, which leads to a strong network of industry stakeholders that can help reduce the risk of crises and disasters. Therefore, cross-sector stakeholder collaboration is vital when managing, responding and recovering from disasters.

Methodology

This study explores the realities shaped by tangible and intangible mental construction of the people who have experienced a crisis in their organisations related to the Easter Sunday attack. Upon referring to the consequences, we believe the social constructivism perspective would be more appropriate and applicable to exploring people's experiences with the crisis phenomenon. The choice of a qualitative inquiry for this research mainly depends on the fact that it touches on a relatively novel area. When a research problem requires a deep understanding of the human experience common to a group of people, phenomenological studies are well suited (Siddiqi, 2021). Phenomenological studies describe the meaning of several individuals for their lived experience of a concept or a phenomenon. Therefore, phenomenology has become the most suitable method for this study (Smith, 2011). Purposive sampling was used to collect data since the researcher is familiar with the industry and knows whom to choose to answer the research question. The nine senior managers representing various organisations in the tourism sector in Sri Lanka were interviewed.

Table 1: Profile of the interviewees

| Type of the industry sector | No of participants |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Government sector – a representative from the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority | 01 |
| 2. Large-scale accommodation sector -representatives From the Tourist Hotel Association of Sri Lanka | 02 |
| 3. Small and medium-scale Accommodation sector Representatives from the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism Sri Lanka | 02 |
| 4. Inbound and outbound Travel and Tour operators' sector, the representative from the Association of Inbound Tour Operators | 02 |
| 5. Travel agents- representatives from the travel agent's association of Sri Lanka. | 02 |

The interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes, were recorded and later transcribed, and then coded and identified major themes. The thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected materials. Researchers in the study established and followed enough protocol and procedures to maintain the trustworthiness of the current study using the member checking technique, whereby the participants checked the transcript to ensure they were accurate with the information provided (Creswell, 2007). The current research is based on the life experience of the stakeholders faced with the Easter Sunday attack and has disclosed sensitive information. Therefore, the researcher has taken appropriate action to ensure meeting ethical standards. For example, the researcher has taken the participants' consent and ensured the anonymity of the individuals. In addition, the researcher has obtained all the information honestly and transparently to achieve research objectives.

Findings

Emergent themes related to the participants' experience after the Easter Sunday Attack are presented in the following section.

Loss of visitor arrival and the revenue

Participants revealed that all the businesses directly and indirectly involved in the tourism sector had suffered heavily during and after this incident. Soon after this incident, it was broadcasted worldwide; all foreign countries introduced travel advisory notifications that no one could travel here, stating the unsafe situation in Sri Lanka, giving visitors away from the country, responded added. Hence Sri Lanka suffered a decline in tourist arrivals and associated revenues. The hotel industry and its employees were mainly affected due to this incident. One of the respondents revealed that:

"That was a serious blow, as a company, as a country; from the very high position we came to zero, we had a clear run of 10 years of successful tourism, and suddenly after this happened, it bought almost zero."

For example, in the case of the Bali bomb attack that occurred in October 2002, the government of Bali, industry, and the community had limited assurance on pulling out the travel advisories; hence there was a massive reduction in the tourist arrivals, loss of revenue, job losses, and social unrest (Gurtner, 2016). A similar scenario was in Sri Lanka with this attack as respondents stated the industry people had lost 100% of their businesses due to this incident. They have spent several days without a single sale. Further, they stated that thousands

of unemployed or employee contracts were not continued. Because the loss of the tourist arrivals and the associated economic down turning had a direct impact on the community and the business, including job losses, unemployment, unpaid loans, social tensions, and the industry as a whole suffered, they added. Therefore, the tourism industry is an inevitable threat to disasters and crises (Jiang & Ritchie, 2017).

Loss of the Image

The destination image is the perception of the destination, created in the visitors' minds or power to invoke specific images into visitors' minds (Mair et al., 2016). Usher et al. (2019) argued that many previous studies have pointed out that a strong recovery is possible for tourist destinations from successful communication campaigns focusing on restoring their image. The response stated that during the last ten years after the 30-year civil war against LTTE, Sri Lanka had developed a peaceful, positive image among foreign visitors. However, soon after the Easter Sunday attack, the peaceful image of Sri Lanka was destroyed within one second since this attack mainly focused on foreign tourists.

Further, respondents explained that a favourable image is essential for any tourist destination. The problems with civil unrest in any destination visitors are considered a negative image for tourism; hence the visitors are discouraged from spending holidays in such destinations (Pike & Page, 2014). Participants pointed out that the Tourism industry is often unable to recover soon as other industries after the disasters because the attraction of the destination is derived from its image. The Easter Sunday attack has damaged this image of Sri Lanka substantially and seriously as a safe place to visit. There was a considerable impact on tourism arrivals which heavily depended on consumer safety and security; therefore, the Easter Sunday attack devastated tourism arrivals.

Loss of confidence

Respondents explained that though there is physical damage to the destination, like infrastructure, which can be repaired quickly, the most challenging part is rebuilding the visitor's confidence, which is harder to achieve. They further stated that the Easter Sunday attack has negatively impacted not only the visitors' confidence but also the tour operators and hoteliers. The visitors were in the area of the incident at the time of the incident and lost confidence over other visitors, facing greater risk as they lacked local knowledge on how to respond to the incident.

The biggest problem country faced was a change in the behaviour of the visitors who were already planning to visit since they believed that it was too much riskier to travel to Sri Lanka and cancelled the booking while demanding advance payments. Discussions revealed that the respondents highlighted that there was no valid policy of the relevant authority at the time of the incident to media reports.

One of the senior managers representing the star-class hotel stated:

"The rebuilding of both international and domestic confidence is the primary and the most important when considering the crisis management since the boosting in the public and investor confidence depend on the successful recovery steps taken".

Respondents suggested that the information provided was insufficient. In the event of a similar incident in the future, the government should be able to provide more accurate information soon as the problem arises in the country so that the visitors know the actual situation.

Strategies taken to rebuild the industry

Safety and Security

Tourism cannot develop where the place is perceived as dangerous, which has deep interconnection with tourism (Huang, Tseng, & Petrick, 2008). Respondents explained that safety and physical security are the primary and most important factors for a tourism destination, so international tourism highly depends on safety and security issues. Therefore, safety and security significantly impact tourism and travel decision-making. One of the senior officials related to the tourism association revealed that:

"Safety and security are a primary concern factor like a country having a 30 years separatist war, however at the time of this incident happened, Sri Lanka government has neglected the country's security measurements and the incident evident that the intelligence activities also were deplorable at that time".

A lack of attention to the previous terrorist attack in Washington was taken as an opportunity for the aeroplane hijack incident on September 11. In contrast, the relevant authority neglected the terrorist attack in Indonesia before the Bali bombing was the leading cause of the Bali bomb attack (Ritchie, 2004).

Accordingly, now a day's tourism industry is challenged with a growing amount of global risk, and if a tourist feels that there is an unsecured situation at a particular destination, an overall unfavourable impact is expected to result, they further revealed. However, on the other hand, safety and security are essential to safeguard the life and properties vital for the industry's survival.

Respondents explained that destination perception has a direct relationship with tourist arrivals, while tourist arrivals depend on the safety and security of the destination. However, after this incident, the Sri Lanka government has taken necessary action to restore the safety and security of the country. Respondents revealed that the army forces had done a tremendous job. All the forces got together and established intelligent sharing arrangements for terrorist operatives. Security measurements were established soon after the attack to avoid further attacks. The further long-term concern is that the government has developed new security policies and strategies to avoid future terrorist attacks like this.

As discussed above, tourists' perception of risk increases when there is a possibility of a terrorist attack. As a result, tourists who cancel their travel plans or change their plans to some other safe destination cause a downturn in tourist arrivals. Down-turning of the tourist arrivals negatively impacts the economy, which cannot achieve the target of the destination. Respondent revealed that the same thing happened to Sri Lanka. They strongly highlighted that with this incident, restoration of safety and security became a national government priority since this incident happened to lack the government's attention for national security and safety. Further, they suggested that tourism crisis management prioritises security and safety, security measures, the national intelligence service, etc. Such security measures should aim to effectively and efficiently reduce the risk concerning visitors and uncertainty in the country.

Crisis Communication

Lack of communication with the general public and the stakeholders is vital considering disaster and crisis management (Mair et al., 2016b). Effective communication is a critical element in achieving disaster management during the disaster, and after the disaster for the speedy recovery of the crisis since communication is the primary way of understanding the actual situation of the disaster and sharing information with external agencies like emergency departments, industry associations and media are required to show the direction of the fast recovery and ensure the flow of accurate information (Ghaderi, Som, and Henderson, 2012). On the other hand, they revealed that managing

communication is critical to crisis management. Respondents believe that the media play a vital role in this concern since it can shape the public's understanding of the incident. Therefore, accurate media coverage is essential. However, they can create negative stories that often damage the country's image and delay recovery. In this regard, Sri Lanka's media coverage has dramatically influenced the situation's risk reduction. Participants explained that:

"We had to address the global regarding the country's current status properly. The higher personnel in the forces delivered the message to the world about the country's safety and security. Through the media, huge publicity was given, and slowly and gradually, we rebuilt the industry," they explained.

Visitors are vulnerable during the crisis due to the lack of knowledge they reveal. Conversely, successful communication strategies are essential as the visitor's perception of an incident strongly influences the media to report it to the general public. Responding soon to the demand of the media and the general community is vital since the media has deadlines to work and always tries to access quick sources of information (Waligo et al., 2013). One of the senior managers has revealed that:

"There should be a local authority representative responsible for controlling the media; otherwise, the media has the power to break the country as a whole".

Participants believe that all actions and strategies for the recovery process depend on understanding the actual situation. According to the discussion, crisis communication includes delivering consistent and accurate information on the disaster situation and avoiding messy and incorrect information during and after the disaster. One of the senior managers empathised with that:

"Open and honest communication helps to facilitate effective task coordination as well as delivering messy and incorrect information can be ignored or miss out on successful recovery management when achieving the common goal. Media normally overestimated the impact of the disaster and showed the harmful outcomes only, hence failing to assist in building the confidence and the perception by delivering positive stories".

Respondents highlighted the communication with the media because the misleading information and sensationalism may negatively affect the visitor's perception of the destination. Further, they emphasised that the communication

between the stakeholders within the industry and the general public and the marketing communication in later stages are vital since the image and reputation of the tourist destination depend on the tourist's perception of the message communicated to them.

Stakeholder collaboration

Respondents stated that stakeholders' collaboration is necessary to help recover from the negative effect of the disaster. Such a strong build-up network among the stakeholders has also led to minimising the impact risk and cost-effective recovery (Faulkner & Vikulov, 2001). Furthermore, the emergency and severe characteristics of the crisis and the disasters have naturally given shared problems for stakeholders in the industry and facilitated collaboration to execute the recovery objectives (Gurtner, 2016).

One of the respondents explained that:

"key stakeholders of the industry such as the government, hoteliers and the tour operators have played a vital role during and after the disaster, crisis and the disaster generally bring massive physical and reputational damage to the tourism industry, which is a common issue faced by all the stakeholders in the industry hence the recovery become a part of everyone in the industry which requires solving by a collaboration of everyone."

Morakabati et al., (2017) argued that the government's point of view contributes to the recovery process that can be done in the way of providing infrastructure and reconstruction, providing financial assistance for tourism businesses, and developing communication and marketing campaigns to promote tourism in the existing and new market segments. Respondents explained that the government could closely work with the other national authorities to increase the accessibility of the affected areas to reconstruct public facilities like roads and airports. The government can also make appropriate capital investments for future development. Then, direct financial support can be given by the government to the affected tourism businesses, such as waving taxes and providing low-interest loans and subsidies; in addition, these governments can make policy changes to get more attractions for outbound tourism. Thirdly developing communication is crucial for providing up-to-date information on the crisis to stakeholders to create confidence among the visitors.

Respondents specified that the government is also responsible for providing destination marketing after the disasters by building a relationship with overseas

embassies, large tourism companies, and strong advertising for the target markets. Other stakeholders, like hoteliers, were upscaling the marketing strategies to attract new customers while offering rate reductions for the prevailing customers. Most hoteliers return the advances paid by the visitors for future bookings to maintain their brand image. The private sector hotels and tour operators have introduced unique packages and new tourism products targeting the length of stay and the visitor's spending. Hoteliers who can run with the staff cost have kept their staff by paying the salaries only.

Prevention and planning

According to Huang et al. (2008), successfully responding and recovering from a crisis refers to prevention and planning for a crisis. Respondents revealed that the lacking of a crisis /disaster management plan, the coping mechanism of the recovery process was utterly ad hoc and reactive. Therefore, the stakeholders emphasised the importance of proactive management planning, helping businesses to return to the ordinary operating condition quickly and successfully (Tew et al., 2008). Further, they revealed that without such a framework, crisis management would not be successful and lead to a "ripple effect", and such a plan may consist of competent staff.

They empathised that:

. If there is crisis prevention and planning in the tourism field, it may help to recognise an unexpected event before it becomes a verse and the recovery and rebuilding of the industry more successfully what we have done".

Respondents highlighted that identifying the critical roles, responsibilities, structure, and resources within the 24 hours of the incident is essential since the unprofessional response may damage the other image of the destination, establishing a responsible unit or management for crisis management and enhancing faster recovery.

Organisational learning and knowledge management

Knowledge refers to the sharing of the experience of the industry people; those who have run the business at the wrong time but have achieved success will help the industry as a whole to minimise any effect of the future crisis (Blackman et al., 2011).

Respondents highlighted long-term disaster preparedness while explaining the need of individuals and society to successfully base disasters and crises in the

future; getting better knowledge from experience means listening to the past and preparing for the future.

One participant specified that:

"Learning from the experience and applying this new knowledge is a key factor for better survival in the industry like tourism having a changeable environment, the organisational learning enhances the effectiveness of the crisis management strategies as well".

More discussion with the various stakeholders and developing an effective partnership is very successful. There should be a proper collaboration with all the parties sharing their knowledge to rebuild the industry, not only concerning local but sharing with the other destinations with a similar experience of facing a similar type of incident. For example, the strategies taken by the Bali Tourism Board since Bali has been targeted many times for terrorist attacks. They have implemented a proactive risk reduction plan (to develop a non-competitive environment to share the information for the general interest, promote anti-terrorism disaster risk reductions, and enhance the capability of reacting to any threats. In addition to these actions, the Bali Hotels Association supports promoting education, training, and the environment by conducting various programs and sharing their knowledge among the community. The Indonesian Ministry of culture and tourism has developed other regional tourism destinations that have widely accepted a Tsunami ready toolbox that was internationally awarded for sharing their experience.

Diversification strategies in the tourism sector

Most crisis incidents and disasters in tourist destinations have a high impact since the industry depends on its primary tourism product to motivate visitors to visit the destination. Therefore, if the country is suffering issues related to one or a few areas, then the country must see other alternative options (Calgaro and Lloyd, 2008). Respondents specified that Sri Lanka tourism depends on high seasonal tourism products such as historical events and environmental images. Therefore, the impact of the Easter Sunday attack was tremendous. They added that looking at a new market is the best way to recover the losses arising from this incident. Disasters, crises, and global economic threats continuously fluctuate the productivity of the tour, so the private sector and the local authority must see the opportunities available in the international high-growth markets (Sawalha et al., 2013).

One respondent recommended:

"Not to rely on traditional tourism such as marketing on the natural resources, Sri Lanka tourism has to think about the niche markets to diversify tourism products concerning the new trend of tourism such as medical, health, wellness and spa, eco and adventure tourism. Currently, there is a global trend focusing on sports tourism".

This is further evident from another respondent in the study.

Diversification strategies have an advantage to more tourism sustainable development in terms of protecting natural resources and value-added products and services and strengthening linkages between tourism and other industries.

Benur and Bill (2015) emphasised that diversifying tourism products is crucial for developing tourism destinations. Finally, the participants commented that the mutually beneficial and cooperative relationship between the mix of tourism products would create a profitable product and lead to sustainable development and competitive advantage of the destination.

Sustainable tourism strategies

Sustainable tourism or responsible tourism refers to taking care of the economy, environment, and community while minimising tourism's negative impact and maximising tourism's positive impact (Farmaki et al., 2019). This study further explained that sustainable tourism covers developing tourism while focusing on identifying the indicators of managing, monitoring, and minimising the adverse effects of tourism.

Respondents revealed that so far as the government of Sri Lanka actively promoted the calm and beauty of the unique Sri Lankan culture and the environment, the tourism industry's continued unsustainable growth, Sri Lanka has eradicated that environment because of poorly regulated planning decisions. The government can be aware of the general community rather than destroying the environment and how the environment can be used to enhance livelihoods (Gurtner, 2016).

One of the CEO of a well-recognised, leading tourism institution in Sri Lanka empathised with that:

"to avoid these types of incidents in the future depends on government policies. Considering the past years' experience, we have taken attention to bringing the four green "P" concepts to Sri Lanka. The four "green P" concept refers to the

"People", "Planet", "Profit", and the "Peace" with the view of making peaceful and sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. We took over the team-building community relationship starting from the school level, getting children of Muslims, Tamils, and Sinhalese as a solution to the long-term view. This effort is made to win the people's hearts, building love, empathy, comparison of every community member, ultimately sustainable tourism".

Further participants specified that sustainable tourism requires a mixed approach, covering every aspect of the destination for an extended period. It focuses on generating benefits for all stakeholders and protecting the destination to ensure it is free of threats, crises, and disasters. Signals arising from any part of the tourism industry may indicate the crisis or stability of the system and imply the vulnerability to change.

Proposed model

According to the findings of the previous scholarly articles, as shown in the literature review part and the discussion made with the primary critical stakeholders in the industry, this study proposed an innovative integrated approach that could be used for crisis management plans in the future. In this model, a similar life cycle framework of (Fink, 1986; Robert, 1984; Faulkner, 2001; Huang et al., 2008) is integrated with the strategic framework of (Tew et al., 2008) and the holistic approach found in scholarly articles (Jcu, 2014; Gurtner, 2016) which have clearly explained in the literature chapter was based with the findings of the discussions made.

Proposed Model for Crisis Management of Tourism

| Stages in the disaster process | Activity of the disaster management response |
|---------------------------------------|---|
|---------------------------------------|---|

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identification of the potential impact of the crisis. ● Identification of the relevant and key public and private sector agencies. ● Establish a disaster management team/task force with the above representatives ● Establish a responsible team coordinating the communication system, including the mass media. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Readiness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure the security, safety, and intelligence services are at the expected level |

- Ensuring the capability of the disaster management team/task force to face the incident. If not so, restructure the team according to the nature of the incident
 - Activate the warning system
 - Formation of a disaster management command centre

 - Response
 - Activate the task force and the media committee
 - Safety and Security
 - Health and security
 - Accommodation and food supply
 - Communication
 - Stakeholders collaboration

 - Recovery
 - Short term strategies***
 - Safety and Security
 - Financial supports
 - Communication
 - Stakeholders collaboration
 - Marketing strategies
 - Monitoring evaluation

 - Long term strategies***
 - Planning and preparedness for the future
 - Tourism product diversification
 - Knowledge management
 - Developing Sustainability of the tourism
 - Developing empathy, love, and comparison among the community
-

Recognition stage

In this stage, the possible impact of the incident is identified as possible ways to reduce the crisis occurrences. Simply recognising the possible impact of the crisis, identifying the relevant and key personnel and the agencies and other initial actions are referring in this stage. After that establishing a disaster management team comprising the identified key agencies is essential so there is a responsible team to coordinate, monitor, supervise, and direct all the matters arising from the incident. The most vital part of this stage is to form a responsible authority for addressing the correct information to the tourist, media, and the community; on the other hand, as the previous studies revealed, managing information helps change the negative perception of the destination in a crisis.

Readiness Stage

This stage refers to preparing for the crisis by evaluating crisis management strategies and communication plans and developing and enhancing crisis management skills. Psychologically prepare the stakeholders, employees, and the community for the crisis's impact and stress. Forming a disaster management command centre as a focal point for conducting the operations of the disaster management team is essential in this stage.

Response Stage

This stage considers all the immediate steps taken to minimise the risk. This is the time to play the role of the task team and the media team established in the "recognise stage". They must coordinate with all the crisis strategies for safety measurements, medical and health, accommodation, and food activities, ensuring they have already been activated. Simply this stage includes the procedures to apply notification of personal and properties. The established emergency team in the "recognition stage" must work with other private, public, and emergency services suppliers. The team must coordinate the management support functions of providing safety and security, medical and health, accommodation, and food supply. Among them, the crisis communication strategy has the most critical role. Establishing a responsible team for the communication matter with well-trained staff to control the information sent to the media is essential to avoid a second impact of the disaster. The task of this team is to work with the media, have a good relationship with the local and international media to update the country's recovery process and promptly provide correct and accurate information. In this stage, the involvement of all tourism-related stakeholders to cooperate to rebuild the industry is a must.

Recover Stage

In this case, it refers to all the strategies taken to recover and rebuild the industry back to its regular status. It comprises two sub-phases, short-term and long-term. Short-term strategies include communication, marketing, financial support for those who face liquidity issues due to the incidents, stakeholder collaboration for sharing information, and the experience to direct the correct path to effective recovery. Long-term steps are the continuation of the short-term phase, but items that cannot be attained quickly consist of planning and preparation of crisis management with the view of getting back the tourist as usual when there is a normal condition in the country. Planning and preparation in this stage refer to identifying the weakness of the previous stages to recover

the industry based on the consultative process ongoing and integrated with other areas of the country.

Furthermore, extended team marketing strategies such as tourism product diversifications are effective strategies for avoiding zero income due to the crisis. Furthermore, sharing information and experience in the industry contributes to avoiding the "ripple effect" of the crisis. Finally, enhancing tourism concerning all aspects of the country, such as economic, social, and political, as well as developing love, empathy, and comparison among the community has empathised as the long-term strategies for the vital tourism industry.

Conclusion and Future research agenda

This research has given additional insight into crises and disasters, assisting the tourism industry in understanding sensitivity and vulnerability. The model introduced in this study will hopefully allow the tourism industry to support and cope with unexpected incidents to minimise their impact and the risk on businesses and society, as well as an efficient and effective way of recovering the industry.

Further, this study emphasised that Stakeholder collaboration is a critical factor for disaster management; hence, identification of the various parties in the tourism sector, their different roles, and different responsibilities in different stages in the disaster management process is essential for speedy and successful recovery of the industry. Therefore, the current study's findings comply with the stakeholder theory.

However, disaster has unique features according to their scale, geographical area, and damage; therefore, different strategies must be implemented to focus on the destination's situation. Furthermore, no crisis has the same form, time duration, and impact (Mair et al., 2016). This indicates the difficulty in developing a standard model to understand crises and disasters and prevent their impact. However, the characteristic of the tourism industry highlighted the necessity of a crisis management plan. Therefore, more attention to crisis knowledge management could enhance crisis and disaster management plans for better development of a common framework, and this will also be an essential topic for future studies. Furthermore, this study will benefit from adopting a qualitative approach and applying the phenomenological approach that the researchers consider underexploited in tourism crisis management research in

the Sri Lankan context. The major limitation of this type of research is that the study's findings cannot be generalised as a world phenomenon. However, it can be generalised for the Sri Lankan context and most South Asian and Asian countries. Therefore, a cross-country study would be suggested to compare the recovery management practices in the tourism sector in Sri Lanka with other countries. The action research design can also be recommended for future researchers since this industry faces many challenges; researchers can help the respondents rectify their challenges while conducting the research.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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