

## **Rebuilding Sri Lankan Tourism after Different Disasters: Marketing Approaches**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Sri Lanka is one of the world's top tourist destinations. Thus, the tourism industry makes a significant contribution to Sri Lanka's economy. However, the tourism industry gets affected by several disasters, which damage the image of Sri Lanka as a premium tourist destination. When rebuilding the industry after such disasters, the role of marketing cannot be undervalued. In such a backdrop, this study aims to explore suitable marketing strategies for rebuilding the Sri Lankan tourism industry after different disasters. Qualitative research approach was followed by conducting twenty-five in-depth interviews with experts in the tourism industry and hotel managers. Data were analysed using thematic analysis approach. Researchers found several factors as important in rebuilding tourism in Sri Lanka and categorized them into three key domains as 'short-term strategies', 'any-time strategies' and 'government engagement'. Sales promotions were recognised as one of the key strategies that can be used in the short term. According to the participants' opinions, discounts and free-added facilities can be spotted as the main sales promotional activities to enhance customers' short-term incentives to visit. As any-time marketing strategies, the importance of proper communication strategies, special events/activities, direct marketing, flexible booking, and cancelling policies were recognized. Government engagement in organizing awareness campaigns and attractive communications also recognized as enabling factors of the proposed marketing approaches*

**KEY WORDS:** *Sri Lanka, Tourism industry, Disasters, Marketing approaches, Rebuilding the tourism*

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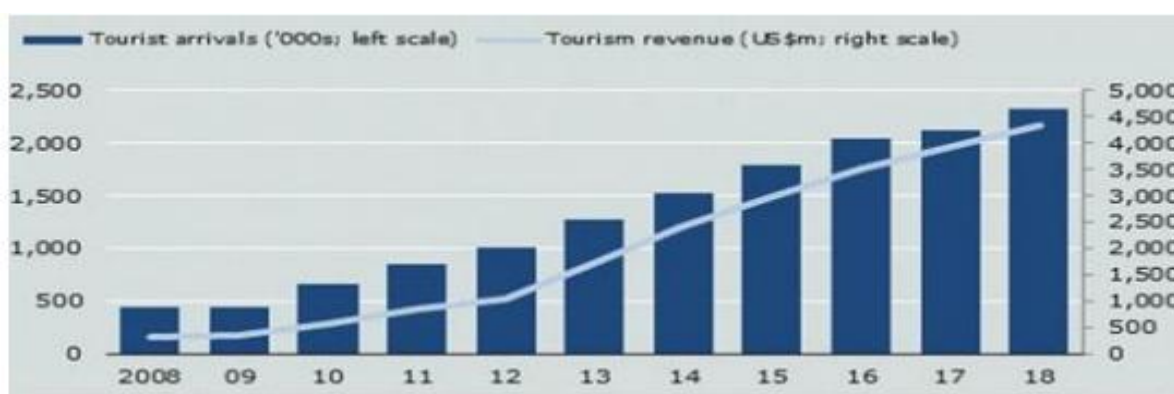
### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Sri Lanka is a popular tourist destination where many foreign tourists are dreaming to visit (Samarathunga, Cheng, & Weerathunga, 2020). Its natural scenic, wildlife, beaches, botanical/zoological gardens, climate, pilgrimage, sports, adventure, and culture make it more popular as a tourist destination. The Sri Lankan tourism industry provides a significant contribution to national GDP. In 2018 Sri Lanka earned \$4.4 billion from the tourism industry, it is 4.9% from Sri Lankan GDP (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2019)

Though tourism is a well-functioning service sector, its demand is susceptible to different environmental conditions. Civil war was the biggest problem that Sri Lankan tourism faced in past years (Robinson & Jarvie, 2008). After the civil war, both the North and Eastern province's tourist destinations such as Nagadeepa Temple, Nallur Kovil, Nilaveli Beach, Arugambay, Pasikuda, Kumana National Park etc. were opened for tourists which caused a rapid development in the tourism industry. And also, developments in the country's infrastructure and the Government's promotional campaigns helped the growth of tourism. Further, the development of online platforms provides convenience for tourists to access information and promotional campaigns through the internet and social media. Tourism opens avenues for new businesses and provides many job opportunities for people in hotels, taxi service, tourist guides, street foods, ayurvedic treatments, tourist villages etc.

Following figure elaborates the tourist arrivals and tourism revenue in Sri Lanka from 2008-2018 and is an evident for the growth of the tourism industry.

Figure1: Tourist arrivals and tourism revenue in Sri Lanka from 2008-2018



Though rapid growth was found in the Sri Lankan tourism industry after the civil war, on several occasions it tumbled resulting in downturns in the growth. Easter Sunday bomb attack in April 2019, natural disasters such as floods, landslides are some examples for them. The recent COVID 19 pandemic is the biggest hit to the Sri Lankan tourism industry in the most recent past and current context.

Since the tourism industry faces many issues with these disasters, finding suitable approaches to rebuild the industry become an utmost priority. However, there are less research work focused on investigating this phenomenon in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, this study aims at exploring marketing approaches that can be used to rebuild Sri Lankan tourism after different disasters.

Next, the paper presents the conceptual background of the study, subsequently, the methodology of the study is elaborated before providing the findings and discussion. Third, theoretical and practical contributions are discussed along with the limitations and future research directions.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review first attempts to understand the tourism industry and especially Sri Lanka as a tourist destination including the contribution of tourism to the Sri Lankan economy. Next, differences between crises and disasters, the nature of the disasters and the impact of disasters on the tourism industry are reviewed. Finally, it discusses the literature on different approaches that can be used to improve the tourism industry after disaster situations.

### Tourism Industry

According to the Theobald (2004) tourism is, 'The activities of visitors, persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business, pilgrimage, etc.'. Tourism industry is recognized as establishments providing services and goods to visitors (Franklin, 2003) including; hospitality (hotels, restaurants, etc.) (Perdue, Immermans, & Uysal, 2004), transport (Peeters, van Egmond, & Visser, 2004), tour operations, and travel agents (Vrana & Zafiroopoulos, 2006), attractions (Plaza, 2000) etc. Theobald (2004) presented three basic forms of tourism as 'domestic tourism' (when residents visiting their own country), 'inbound tourism' (when non-residents traveling in a given country) and 'outbound tourism' (when residents traveling in another country).

As Spain (1998) notes, success of the tourism industry is not only reflected through the demand for tourism. The supply side of the tourism industry also provides an array of services to the growth of the economy (Smith, 1988). The supply side of tourism is a spatial unit encompassing a complex system of initiatives, plans, actions and a diversity of actors, roles, and environmental factors that interact to determine its performance' (Lazzeretti & Petrillo, 2006). Those businesses supply a variety of services to tourism including transportation, accommodation, shopping, catering and entertainment etc. (Soteriades, 2012). Tourists now expect a set of services that allow multiple choices and experiences in a destination involving several interrelated actors.

According to Soteriades (2012) the tourism offering is a 'series of experiences' achieved through the combination of a diverse array of products and services. Tourism offerings can be recognized under five main components such as 'destination attractions', 'destination facilities and services', 'accessibility of the destination' (including transport), 'images', 'brands and perceptions and price to the visitors (Middleton & Clarke, 2001). Destinations are reported to be the most complicated business structures to manage and market due to the sophistication of the stakeholder relationships (Pender & Sharpley, 2004). Demand for destination marketing is growing as a result of customer expectations and rising competition among destinations (Pike, 2004).

### **Sri Lanka as a Tourist Destination**

Growth of tourism in Sri Lanka is bestowed with its location (Wijethunga & Warnakulasooriya, 2014) and the natural beauty presented by attractive beaches and wildlife which offer year-round attractions (Samarathunga et al., 2020), native culture (Siriwardana, Chaminda, & Rathnayake, 2019) and Buddhist heritage etc (Ranasinghe, 2015). Despite being a relatively small country, Sri Lanka is rich with biodiversity and recognized as one of the world's 25 biodiversity hotspots (Ranasinghe, 2015).

The Cultural Triangle which connects Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Kandy is another common source of tourist attraction (Ranasinghe, 2015) where five of seven Sri Lanka world heritage sites are situated in this Cultural Triangle (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2019). Hill Country is considered as one of the most significant tourist attraction places in Sri Lanka. Sri Dalada Maligawa is the most visited place in Kandy and also, Esala Perahera is very popular among tourists worldwide. Nuwara Eliya is also a place in the hill capital where tourists mostly visit. It is famous among worldwide tourists as "Little England" and comprises with beautiful parks, well-kept lawns with hedges, and a golf course etc. (Ranasinghe, 2015).

### **Contribution of Tourism to the Sri Lankan Economy**

Tourism is the heart of some economies (Fernando, Bandara, & Smith, 2017). According to the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2019), the direct contribution of tourism for the Sri Lankan GDP is 4.3%. And also, in 2019 foreign exchange earnings of the tourism industry is US \$ 646,362.3 million and ranked as the third contributor by the industry. Public sector institutions derive revenue from tourism in a variety of ways, namely direct and indirect taxes, fees and levies, profits from business undertakings, etc. In the year 2019, public sector revenue from tourism is 9,586.80 million, while top three revenue sources were Cultural Triangle Entrance, Embarkation Taxes and the Wildlife Parks. The government earns a massive revenue from indirect taxes such as electricity, water, mail services, telecommunication, lease rentals, etc. (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2019).

### **Different between Crises and Disasters**

A crisis refers to 'some extent self-inflicted through problems such as inept management structures and practices or a failure to adapt to change' whereas disaster can be defined as 'the situations where an enterprise confronted with sudden unpredictable and catastrophic change over which it has little control' (Russell & Faulkner, 1999). The definition of crises derives when a human, organization, or society interacts with an event called crises. The word crisis refers to a human view of a shock event. This event can impact a system positively or negatively. A positive event is an opportunity for the company or the destination, whereas an immediate risk is a negative event (Barton, 1994). A disaster is a negative catastrophic occurrence that affects a system (Quarantelli, 1988). There is no unified response to the crisis or disaster.

### **The Impact of Disasters on the Tourism industry**

Disasters in the tourism industry can be varied according to the magnitude of the incident, the extent of control, and time pressure (Robinson & Jarvie, 2008). Three types of disasters are recognized as, 'immediate disasters' (there is little or no indication), 'emerging crises' (these are slower in progress and can be prevented or restricted by an organizational intervention) and 'sustained crisis' (that could last for weeks, months, or even years) (Parsons 1996).

Tourism is vulnerable to both the manmade disasters, as well as natural disasters. Visitors, particularly foreigners are more vulnerable to danger than anyone (Drabek, 1995). Murphy and Bayley (1989) indicate that tourism vulnerability to natural disasters is related to the attractiveness of many exotic places at high risk. They even run the risk of being hijacking and terrorism, because tourists have become soft targets (Lehrman, 1986). Also, visitors are often more vulnerable in disaster situations than locals because they are less familiar with local hazards (Fernando, Bandara, Liyanaarachch, Jayathilaka, & Smith, 2013) and the services that can be used to mitigate such risks are less autonomous (Burby & Wagner, 1996).

Another most highlighted negative impact of disasters is bad reputation. Typically, the impact of a disaster to the tourism industry has disruptive effects due to media distortion (Cassedy, 1991; Drabek, 1995; Murphy & Bayley, 1989). According to Milo and Yoder (1991) disaster situations provide a fertile ground for misinformation. Cassedy (1991) noted that media reports may have devastating effects on destinations impacted by the disaster. According to González-Herrero and Pratt (1998), destination recovery typically takes longer time (Cassedy, 1991; Hirose, 1982) and therefore disaster management strategies must be integrated with communication strategies to speed the recovery.

### **Marketing Approaches to Rebuild Tourism Industry after different Disasters**

According to the Gabby Walters and Mair (2013), a variety of disaster-affected destinations have used marketing strategies to overcome these issues. In some cases, short-term price cuts are used as strategies while

in others, the industry gets the benefit by adding value to the product (Beirman, 2020). Incentives are required to regain the market that has been exposed to negative expectations. Recovery incentive campaigns are intended to stimulate tourism demand on a timely basis and thus need to be of short length (Beirman, 2020).

Product diversification is another choice available to operators and destinations. Festivals have been proposed to provide an incentive to promote visits and can be a drawcard for those who have not visited the destination before (Lehto, Douglas, & Park, 2008). Social Media is used to measure public opinion and promote tourism in a positive light. Facebook is another tool which can be used to publish images of tourists visiting destinations and events (Avraham, 2016). Events help to focus the media's attention for a short, concentrated period on a specific location, allowing the host location to promote certain selected images that can be used to generate positive news, and shift international media attention from a negative to a positive (Wang, 2011).

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this research is exploring marketing strategies to rebuild the Sri Lankan tourist industry after disaster situations. Based on the Inductive research approach, which is the most applicable method for such kind of a purpose, a qualitative study was conducted. Sri Lankan Tourism Industry related hotels were considered as the target population and 25 industry experts including hotel managers were chosen to the sample using non probabilistic judgmental approach.

To get experts' insights, in-depth interviews were conducted until achieving information redundancy. Due to the Covid 19 travel restrictions, some of the interviews were conducted using the zoom technology and over the phone. Upon finishing, interviews were transcribed and re-read until the researcher got familiar with the information. Thematic analysis method was used to recognize underlying themes. The analysis process went through six stages such as, transcribing data, organising data, familiarizing with data, coding, generating themes and ensuring rigour.

### **IV. DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS**

The study aimed at exploring marketing approaches to rebuild the Sri Lankan tourism industry after different Disasters. The study found several marketing related strategies and categorized under 3 groups. The first group is presenting "short term marketing approaches" that can be used in a disaster situation to regain the market. The researcher found sales promotions as one of the key strategies that can be used in the short term. According to the interview responses, discounts and free added facilities can be spotted as the main short-term sales promotional methods. Second, the study found "anytime marketing strategies", such as using proper communication strategies, special activities, direct marketing, flexible booking and cancelling policies as important in overcoming problems in tourism. Further, government engagement is recognized as important in promoting Sri Lanka as one of the best tourist destinations and awareness campaigns and attractive communications found under government support which helps to achieve proposed marketing approaches.

#### **Short-Term strategies**

As we found, Sri Lankan tourism can do sales promotions as a short-term remedy to attract tourists. This is just a short-term incentive to motivate customers to visit. However, organizations can discontinue this practice after they regained the market.

#### **Sales Promotions**

According to the interviews, use of sales promotions is recognized as important to increase sales after disaster situations. The prominence of discounts and free added facilities were recognized as significant.

**Discounts:** In times of disaster, hotel discount rates vary according to tourist demand. As per the respondents, discounts are widely used as short-term strategies to attract tourists in or after the times of disasters.

*Sometimes we offer discounts of between 5% and 80%. The discount rate offered in case of disasters depends on the tourist demand. On hotel booking websites, you can see how discount rates change in the event of a disaster. (Manager; Hotel in Digana)*

The study found that especially the local tourists are more sensitive than foreign tourists for the sales promotional activities such as discounts.

*In the early days when the Easter attack was over, we offered discounts around 50% to 60% and tourism was gradually recovering. After that when the business returned to normal it stopped giving discounts to foreign tourists. After a while, giving discounts to local tourists were gradually reduced and discontinued. Because both local and foreign tourists are attracted to discounts. But local tourists are more attracted to discounts than foreign tourists. (Manager; Hotel in Unawatuna, Galle)*

It suggests that discounts as a short-term sales promotion method attracts more local tourists. When the tourism industry resumes after a disaster situation, local tourists are the first to start travelling. Therefore, giving discounts to local tourists is a successful marketing approach that can be used in the early stages of resuming tourism after a disaster.

**Free Added Facilities:** Another short-term marketing approach used by hotels in times of disaster is to provide free added facilities for travellers. They do not change their package rates when the demand for tourism decreases in times of disaster. Rather they promote the package by adding extra features to the same price.

*Normally, in disaster situations we don't change our package rates, but we add free facilities for our packages. As an example, we freely provide the Golf ground, Gym, for a bed and breakfast package and promote it on our website and social media. Tourists are highly attracted to these types of free facilities... (Restaurant Manager, Hotel in Colombo)*

According to another respondent, the addition of free facilities to regular packages is as important as giving discounts in disaster situations. Because people are mentally and physically degraded during the times of disaster and engaging with such events would support them to be relaxed.

*Many tourists visit our hotel for adventurous activities. There are packages we offer to visitors at different prices that can be attended as a group. What we did after the Easter attack was, increased the number of tourists who could join each package without changing the price. For example, we have an adventure package that can involve up to eight people. We allowed fourteen people to participate at the same price. (Owner; Rangala)*

This statement shows that hotels can attract more tourists even in disaster situations by providing added-free facilities.

### **Any time Strategies**

Based on the interview responses, four fundamental anytime strategies were identified. They are Flexible cancellation policy, proper communication strategies, direct marketing and special activities.

### **Flexible Cancellation Policy**

According to the participant's opinions, refunding and allowing to change the bookings are very important in compliance with a flexible cancellation policy.

**Refunding:** Facilities for refunding also derive lots of benefits to hotels. It also increases customer image about the hotel, positive word of mouth, and tendency to revisit. The following statement explain this situation well.

*Our general cancellation policy is that if tourists inform us 14 days in advance, we will refund the money in full. But this time at covid 19 we fully refunded even those who cancelled a day before. Sometimes tourists told us that 'you are having a hard time, therefore, you do not need to refund', but we refunded the full amount. It is a loss for us in the short term, but it is an investment for us in the long run. (Managing Director, a 3-star hotel)*

These benefits are very important when recovering from disaster situations and also can be used in the long term to get tourists' attractions.

**Allow booking changes:** According to another respondent, there are positive feedback from customers when hotels allow them to change bookings specially in disaster situations. Because of this flexible cancellation policy, they had positive feedback on their website, Facebook and Instagram which cause positive word of mouth communication.

*The general cancellation policy of our hotel is that tourists must be notified 7 days in advance that the reservation will be cancelled. We did not use our usual cancellation policy during the hard periods. We allowed them to do free cancellation/changing of their bookings even after seven days. (Owner; Hotel in Kanthale)*

And also, it caused an increase in the ratings of their hotel in booking and tourist advising websites. It suggests that flexible cancellation policy is very important as a marketing strategy when facing a disaster situation and regain the market after disasters.

### **Proper Communication strategies**

According to the participants' opinions, use of mass communication is out of the control of the tourism industry. However, they can control their communication strategies and maintain a hotel website, social media platforms etc. to attract customers.

**Use of social media:** As respondents stated, social media is very important in a disaster situation to make tourists feel to travel. Further, it helps to enhance customer re-visits.



*We have given more importance to social media even in normal times. But I see social media as a very important thing in a disaster situation. Because at times like that, people are stuck in their homes. Therefore, the use of social media is very high. We share things like photos and videos and inform about our promotions to attract tourists. Especially in disaster situations, we share photos and videos of the changes we made in our hotels. Customers who visit us after seeing such information in social media leave good comments. (Manager; Hotel in Unawatuna; Galle)*

Another participant said that sharing videos, especially through social media, gives tourists some kind of experience. Researchers found that in a disaster situation where tourism has been discontinued, this method can be used to motivate tourists to travel.

**Well Maintained Website:** According to participants, maintaining the website appropriately is very important for the tourism industry, not only in disaster situations.

*I think having a well-maintained website is very important to hotels. We can give them the information about packages and discounts through the website. We can also connect tourists through the website. (Managing Director; Hotel in Kandy).*

A well-maintained website provides opportunities to communicate promotions and get valuable customer ideas. Further, it helps to attract tourists when the industry is recovering from disaster situations.

### **Direct Marketing**

In the interviews, respondents presented two main concepts of direct marketing. These are personal (email, phone, text messages) and database marketing.

**E-mails and Phone Text Messages:** According to participants, the hotels can personally communicate with potential customers via email and text messages.

*We continued to be in touch with them to bring back bookings cancelled due to the covid 19 when the country returned to normal. We have emails and numbers that we get when booking. Most of what we do is send personal emails and messages. We sent a lot of beautiful pictures related to our hotel and also asked what effect covid 19 has had on them. Emails and messages from travellers have been very well received and are still being received. (Manager; Hotel in Unawatuna, Galle)*

According to this response, such personal contacts with the customer build a good relationship with them.

**Database Marketing:** According to some of the respondents, they have information about the customers who visited the hotel, what they prefer, what areas they like to visit, their favourite foods, important information etc. According to these important pieces of information they provide customized communication to attract re-visits.

*We maintain a database of important information from both local and foreign tourists who visited our hotel. So we take information from that database and send personalized messages and emails. We use it as a marketing trick. We do more and more database marketing in disaster situations like covid19, Easter attack. We got a good response from them. Many people who sent us personalized messages and emails during the Easter attack visited us later. And we did the same at covid19. We think some of them will visit us when covid19 is over. (Owner; Hotel in Nuwara Eliya)*

According to the respondents, researchers identified the importance of database marketing to attract customer re-visits.

### **Special Activities**

According to research interviews, organizing and promoting special activities can be seen as another marketing approach that can be used to bring customers back to hotels.

**Adventure Activities:** According to participants, tourists prefer adventure activities more. Thus, promoting adventure activities can be useful as a marketing approach when rebuilding their business after disaster situations.

*Our hotel is close to a jungle so most of us are visited by people who like to be free and adventure activities. There are many waterfalls and rivers in the Knuckles Mountains near our hotel. A short distance from our hotel is a river with seven waterfalls. We organize a lot of adventure activities for foreigners in places like that. So in my opinion, about 80% of the tourists who visit us after a disaster period usually come for adventure activities. (Owner; Hotel in Rangala)*

**Wellness Tourism:** Sri Lanka is a country that holds a special place among the countries that do wellness tourism. Meditation, Yoga, Ayurvedic treatments can be specified as the most focused wellness tourism activities. Wellness tourism can be described as a successful marketing strategy that can be used to attract

tourists, especially after a disaster. Because people are subjected to various physical and mental afflictions due to catastrophic conditions. At such times a lot of people resort to such wellness activities.

*Our hotel offers various facilities for tourists, one of which is yoga. We have a large customer base of tourists from European countries. During that time there was a decrease in fun activities. But even though the number of tourists who come to yoga is lesser compared to the past. However, usually a significant number of tourists visit for yoga after the Easter attack. (Manager; Hotel in Matale)*

**Sports:** Sports promotion is another strategy that can be used to attract foreign tourists at a time when the tourism industry is collapsing. Doing sports promotions can be helpful to attract a lot of foreign tourists who like them. It can also motivate tourists to visit Sri Lanka.

*We target surfing and our other water sports. In fact, Sri Lanka is very popular among foreign tourists for water sports. These are the key features that can promote the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. At the time of the easter attack, tourists were very scared to come to Sri Lanka. At such a time we were able to promote sports and get the attention of tourists. Not only water sports but for example there are many adventure sports in the mountains that can be promoted as something special. That means we want to create a special desire in their hearts to come to Sri Lanka. (Owner; Hotel in Matara).*

### **Government Engagement**

According to the comments made by respondents, the researcher recognized that the role of the government is very important in disaster situations.

**Government Official Notices:** As the study found, there are lots of false propagandas spread all over the world because of different media activities such as social media. Therefore, the Sri Lankan government needs to mediate these situations and give official notices about the true situation of the country. It will help local and foreign tourists to make decisions and also hotels to use their marketing plans in disaster situations.

*I think the Sri Lankan government has a big role in a Disaster situation. Because the Sri Lankan tourism industry targets foreign tourists heavily compared to the local tourists. So, when a disaster happens, government official notices are very important to get the decision for foreign tourists. Because foreign tourists strictly consider the safety situation of the country when choosing a country to travel to. And foreign governments advise their people according to the Sri Lankan government official notices. And also, there is a lot of false propaganda spread worldwide when disasters happen because of the media reports. Especially social media causing false propaganda. Therefore, lots of foreigners are scared to come to Sri Lanka. Therefore, government involvement is important in these problems. (Owner, Hotel in Theldeniya),*

**Provision of Infrastructure:** According to participants' opinion, some disasters damage the properties and infrastructure of a country. Whatever the marketing strategies that tourism industry uses to attract tourists, their willingness to visit a country sometimes depends to the country's infrastructure facilities. Therefore, the government's support to improve the infrastructures of the country becomes significant to get tourist attraction.

*Infrastructure facilities in Sri Lanka are important when promoting tourism. Transportation is an essential facility for promoting tourism. Foreigners appreciate the easy documentation procedure too. Especially in disaster situations, the government takes a long time for documentation work. It is very uncomfortable for tourists. (Owner; Hotel in Nuwara Eliya).*

**Awareness campaigns and attractive communications:** When consider disaster situations, it is more complicated than normal situations when planning a trip. Because in a disaster, the situation is unpredictable, and some serious obstacles can happen. Therefore, providing useful information and making tourists aware of prevailing conditions is essential. Further, the government should interfere and use mass communication to conduct awareness campaigns and to promote Sri Lanka as a prominent tourist destination.

*Foreigners are from faraway countries. So, after the disasters when they are going to travel, they need to make sure that Sri Lanka is safe. So, we must always provide important information they want. Further, the government can run attractive advertisements to promote Sri Lanka tourism. (Managing Director, A five-star hotel)*

According to respondent statements, it's clear that the government should play a key role to promote Sri Lankan tourism, apart from the effort taken by individual players in the tourism industry.

## **V. DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

This research aims to explore marketing approaches that can be used to rebuild Sri Lankan tourism after different disasters, especially paying attention to hotels. Via in-depth interviews, 25 participants were interviewed to gain insights.

According to the responses, sales promotions are identified as a suitable short-term marketing approach that can be used to regain the market after different disasters. Discounts and Free added facilities were identified as sales promotional methods that can be effectively used. When considering any-time marketing approaches, flexible cancellation and booking policies were identified. And also, special activities, direct marketing and proper communication strategies were recognised as other long term marketing approaches. When considering enabling and hindering factors for proposed marketing approaches, the role of government engagement through developing infrastructure, providing official notices, promoting tourism through awareness campaigns and attractive communications were recognised.

The following table summarizes the findings of this study which identifies marketing approaches to rebuild Sri Lanka tourism after disasters.

**Table 1: Summary of the findings**

Short-Term Steps	Any-Time strategies	Government support
Sales promotions	Flexible cancellation policies	Government engagement
(discounts/free added services)	Proper communication strategies	(Infrastructure, Official notices, Awareness campaigns and Attractive communications
	Direct marketing	
	Special activities	

When compare the study findings with available literature, Beirman (2006) notes that discounts as short-term strategies to promote visits by hoteliers. Gabby Walters and Mair (2013) note the importance of handling pricing strategies such as short-term price cuts while Beirman (2006) recognised it as an intensive marketing campaign. Recovery incentive campaigns are intended to stimulate tourism demand on a timely basis and thus need to be of short length (Beirman, 2020). Events can be used to enhance image, generate positive news, and shift international media attention from a negative to a positive representation of the location (Wang, 2011).

According to the Gabrielle Walters and Mair (2012), promotional activities should continue over the course of the disaster recovery period. Armstrong and Ritchie (2008) notes the importance of maintaining visitor databases and communicating with them to enhance re-visits. Avraham (2016) emphasizes the significance of special activities (free- added services) in disaster situations. According to Faulkner (2001), Tourism Disaster Management Framework identify the importance of repairing infrastructure after different disasters. And also, Drabek (1995) recognized transportation as a significant component in tourism marketing management strategies. Current study also recognized the important role of the government, not only in developing infrastructure but also in enhancing tourists' awareness through promoting Sri Lanka as one of the best tourist destinations.

This study provides insights for partners of the tourism industry, mainly hotels and for the Sri Lankan Government on marketing approaches that should be taken to promote Sri Lankan tourism particularly after different disasters. Hotels can obtain short-term strategies such as promotions as short-term incentives to get customer attractions. However, though it's very important to regain the market after disaster conditions, as any-time strategies, hotels can practice flexible booking/cancelling policies, provide special activities, using direct marketing campaigns and using media in appropriate communications. Government engagement also causes in enabling capabilities of the tourism industry by means of improving infrastructure and promoting Sri Lanka as a prominent tourist destination. This study was limited to 25 respondents represent the hotel industry; however, future researchers can extend it to many partners in tourism as well as to a large sample.

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