

Barman!

Tell me about this whisky ...

Visitors are increasingly motivated by the experiences which are on offer during their holiday, and they expect those experiences to be related to the culture, heritage and brand images of their host destination. For Scotland, that must include whisky.

However, with a few notable exceptions, most visitors asking for advice in a pub or hotel about which whisky to try, or what distinguishes one brand from another, will be greeted with blank looks. At best they might get a recommendation based on nothing more than the fact that a certain brand happens to be currently in stock.

Against this background, an initiative which aims to capitalise on the brand strength of Scotch whisky in the development and promotion of Scotland as a tourist destination has been making rapid progress. Scotlandwhisky was launched in August 2003 by Deputy First Minister Jim Wallace, and aims to bring mutual benefit to both the whisky and tourism industries.

The initiative plans to recruit a number of businesses as centres of excellence where customers can be sure of a high quality whisky experience. Staff from 40 companies have already received training which will enhance their knowledge of whisky. After completing a one-day course, delivered by staff from the Scotch Whisky Heritage Centre, delegates' knowledge is tested by sitting an exam before receiving their Certificate in the Sales and Service of Scotch Whisky. The programme gives them the ability to answer visitors' questions about the history of whisky, how it is made, and the key differences between brands. It also gives them the knowledge required to make recommendations to individuals with different tastes. Most importantly, it encourages and motivates staff to take an interest in the product and continue finding out more for themselves as well as sharing their new found expertise with colleagues and visitors.

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