

Venture dubbed 'Skyscanner for Scotch whisky tours' launched

6TH DECEMBER BUSINESS ECONOMY FINANCE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY LEISURE



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Sip Seekers founder Victoria Miller (Image: Sip Seekers)

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A Scottish travel technology start-up which has created a Skyscanner-style search engine for distillery and brewery tours has been launched by an experienced **Scotch whisky** executive.

More than 50 distilleries and breweries have so far signed up to Sip Seekers, which aims to make the process of booking tours easier by allowing consumers to search under availability, location proximity, and spirit type, while generating more revenue for hosts.

The business was founded by Victoria Miller, who launched Sip Seekers this week following a 14-year career that featured sales and marketing roles with St Andrews distiller Eden Mill and Murray McDavid, the independent Scotch whisky bottler.

It is expected that the search engine can help Scotch whisky distilleries and brewers unlock much-needed revenue by opening up their tours to a wider audience.

Although around two million people visit Scotch whisky distilleries every year, just 21% of people who come to Scotland visited a distillery in 2023, according to figures from VisitScotland.

The company contends that its search engine, which specialises in alcohol experiences, can encourage more people from around the world to Scottish **distilleries**. It projects that by increasing distillery visits from two in every 10 visitors to three in 10 would help the industry grow turnover by 50% over a 10-year period, assuming spend per consumer remains constant.

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A range of Scottish drinks companies have signed up to Sip Seeker, with names ranging from long-established distilleries Aberfeldy, Glengoyne, and Benromach to more modern players such as The Clydeside Distillery, **Holyrood** Distillery, and **Edinburgh** Gin.

Ms Miller said: “Put simply, part of the problem is that we don’t make it easy for our guests to find and book tours.

“Scotland has world-class distilleries and alcohol producers, they deliver great experiences for customers but finding and booking these is often quite challenging. It really shouldn’t require opening multiple tabs or making multiple phone calls to decide on best options and due to this the industry is absolutely losing out on bookings.”

Ms Miller developed the idea for Sip Seekers with a friend in the technology industry, and together they came up with a solution they believe will benefit both the drinks industry and consumers. The search engine is understood to consolidate and simplify the booking process for potential customers and ensure that both planned and spontaneous booking opportunities are not missed. According to the company, its engine secures valuable tracking data which can be captured to improve understanding of the broader market.

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The Sip Seekers technology allows users to compare experiences offered by different distilleries. Producers meanwhile retain the value of direct bookings, allowing them to manage their customer relationships and experiences, the company said.

Noting that visitors currently spend an average of £42 at distilleries, Ms Miller declared that drinks tourism is an “untapped growth engine” for Scottish drinks industry.

She said: “Scotland is bursting with brilliant distilleries- from the new and innovative to the historic and world-famous- each offering experiences that genuinely deserve to be shared with the world. Every site has its own story, its own people and its own sense of place. Sip Seekers is all about making that discovery effortless and celebratory. With just a few clicks, travellers can compare options and book directly with the distilleries that suit them best. We hope this simplicity will appeal to whisky, gin, and beer lovers both locally and from further afield.”

Bridgeen Mullen, visitor centre manager at The Clydeside Distillery said: “We are delighted to be partnering with Sip Seekers for their launch. Anything that helps visitors discover the depth of Scotland's heritage and makes it easier for them to plan a visit is a huge win for the industry. Sip Seekers brings a modern, customer friendly approach to showcasing experiences like ours and we are delighted to be part of it from day one.”

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