

The influence of Scotch whisky as cultural alcoholic beverage on travel motivations

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Abstract

This paper investigates the influence of cultural alcoholic beverages, specifically scotch whisky, on motivations for travelling to a destination. Employing a quantitative research approach grounded in the push and pull motivations theory, the paper examines the relationship between whisky and culture as core products and travellers' intention to participate in Scottish whisky tourism. The findings reveal a positive relationship between the intention to participate in whisky tourism and both whisky as a core product and the degree of cultural tourist. These results suggest that perceiving a destination as a producer of high-quality cultural alcoholic beverages can enhance its overall appeal as a tourist destination and whisky as a core product can serve as a motivator for tourism. This study contributes to destination marketing literature by offering insights that are valuable for destination managers and marketers in developing and promoting whisky tourism initiatives.

Keywords: Scotch whisky; Cultural alcoholic beverages; Push and pull motivations theory; Whisky tourism; Cultural product; Scotland.

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1. Introduction

One of the main influences on tourism and destinations is the intention of individuals to participate in local tourism activities (Stone *et al.*, 2017), which includes activities connected with cultural alcoholic beverages, such as Scotch whisky (Christou *et al.*, 2024). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in interest in whisky tourism products and global demand for whisky (Statista, 2022). Similarly, we have observed destinations like Scotland incorporating whisky into their destination marketing campaigns (VisitScotland, 2021). This has led to a growing demand for activities that allow individuals to experience and connect with the tradition, quality, and skills in whisky production (Gil Arroyo *et al.*, 2021). Specifically concerning Scotch whisky, Scotland first adopted distillery visitor centres as a marketing tool in the 1960s, and subsequently, whisky trails inspired by the French chateaux visitor trails were established in 1972 (Martin & Haugh, 1999; Scotch Whisky Association, 2023).

In 2019, prior to the pandemic, Scotch whisky distilleries attracted 2.2 million visitors, ranking as the third most popular tourist attraction in Scotland. (Scotch Whisky Association, 2023). The Scotch Whisky Association states the whisky industry represents the largest single food and drink sector in the United Kingdom, contributing 25% of all UK food and drink exports and 77% of Scotland's food and drink exports. This industry reached 180 markets globally and generated £6.2 billion for the UK economy in 2022 (Scotch Whisky Association, 2023). Despite this trend, research investigating whisky tourism is still scarce, with the most prominent studies conducted by Martin and Haugh (1999), Martin and McBoyle (2006), and McBoyle and McBoyle (2008). Furthermore, past studies in drink tourism mainly concentrated on exploring the characteristics and motivations of wine tourists (Lee *et al.*, 2017; Rachão *et al.*, 2021). Numerous researchers have recognised the importance of wine tourism, noting that wine tourists are inclined to be influenced by a destination's cultural assets and incorporate elements of that culture into their itineraries, improving their entire visit (e.g., Bruwer *et al.*, 2018; Kastenholz *et al.*, 2023; Martínez-Falcó *et al.*, 2024). In contrast, there is a scarcity of studies examining the influence of cultural alcoholic beverages, such as Scotch whisky, on travel motivations.

The potential influence of cultural alcoholic beverages on travel intentions is vast when considering the diversity of such beverages available globally, such as Sherry, Port wine, Cognac, Bourbon, Tennessee whisky, Grappa, Sake, Vodka, Rum, and Tequila, among others. Cultural alcoholic beverages are significant elements of destination identity and offer tourists a unique cultural and sensory experience (Gil Arroyo *et al.*, 2021). These beverages are deeply tied to the regions where they are produced, reflecting local traditions, history, and craftsmanship (Lesh, 2021). The consumption of these drinks is not just about taste, but about engaging with the cultural narratives of a destination, which can influence tourists' perceptions and enhance their travel motivations (Velasco *et al.*, 2013).

Scotch whisky remains an under-researched topic, particularly when considering its significance to Scottish national identity and destination image (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016). While a few studies have explored this topic, none have examined whisky tourism from a specific cultural beverage point of view. This study aims to address this gap in the literature by analysing the relationship between whisky as a cultural alcoholic beverage and travel motivations. The central research question guiding this study is whether Scotch whisky, as a cultural product, influences travel motivations.

This research presents significant insights into the tourism sector, as it offers a deeper understanding of how cultural alcoholic beverages can be leveraged to attract tourists to a particular destination. Whisky tourism has become a well-established component of Scotland's broader tourism offerings that can be compared to visitor centres at vineyards and breweries worldwide (Christou *et al.*, 2024). The growing international interest in whisky, along with the quest for genuine cultural experiences, especially with single malt, has contributed to this phenomenon (MacKenzie *et al.*, 2020; Martin &

McBoyle, 2006), resulting in a growing community of individuals interested in the culture and products associated with whisky (Flynn, 2020).

Additionally, this study has implications for the whisky industry as it demonstrates the capacity for cultural beverages such as scotch whisky to serve as a mechanism for destination marketing. In areas where whisky production is established, manufacturers and destination management organisations have begun investigating potential opportunities to expand the whisky tourism market (Ford *et al.*, 2022; MacKenzie *et al.*, 2020). Despite the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, whisky tourism has not been significantly affected, with only a temporary decrease in activity (Kellershohn, 2022). There have been notable declarations from major industry players such as Diageo and Pernod Ricard regarding their ongoing investments in whisky tourism (Prudour Pvt Lmt, 2022). Overall, this article offers valuable knowledge about the link between cultural alcoholic beverages and tourism, specifically using scotch whisky as a tool for destination marketing and its impact on the tourism and whisky sectors.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis development

2.1 *Drink tourism: a growing niche in gastronomic and experiential tourism*

Drink tourism, incorporating wine, beer, and spirits tourism, has emerged as a significant niche within the broader culinary and experiential tourism fields (Lesh, 2021; Stone *et al.*, 2022). Research has primarily focused on this phenomenon's cultural, economic, and social dimensions, highlighting its role in regional development and sustainability (Fountain, 2022; Stone *et al.*, 2022). In the literature, drink tourism is typically categorised into wine, craft beer, and spirits tourism.

Wine tourism is one of the most established forms of drink tourism, closely associated with exploring wine-producing regions. The literature has shown that it significantly contributes to regional economies by promoting rural areas as tourist destinations (Kastenholz *et al.*, 2023). Wine tourists typically seek immersive experiences such as tastings, vineyard tours, and interactions with winemakers, fostering emotional connections and brand loyalty (Park *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, wine tourism often emphasises sustainable practices, aligning with growing trends in environmentally conscious travel (Martínez-Falcó *et al.*, 2024). Craft beer tourism has experienced exponential growth, particularly in North America and Europe. It emphasises local authenticity and the cultural narratives of breweries, contributing to place-making and fostering community identity (Bowen & Miller, 2023; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022). While beer tourism's economic and cultural impacts are well-documented, limited research explores its intersection with other tourism sectors, such as festivals and urban regeneration initiatives (Nave *et al.*, 2022).

Spirits tourism, enclosing destinations associated with Scotch whisky, Porto wine, Bourbon, or Tequila, represents an emerging segment. While it shares similarities with wine tourism, such as its connection to regional heritage and terroir, it places greater emphasis on the artisanal production process and the historical significance of spirits (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016). Destinations known for specific spirits attract tourists seeking educational and sensory experiences (Kellershohn, 2022). However, research on spirits tourism remains underdeveloped compared to wine and beer tourism, particularly when considering its significance to Scottish national identity and destination image (Christou *et al.*, 2024).

The literature on drink tourism reveals several research gaps. First, while wine and beer tourism have been extensively studied, spirits tourism lacks a comprehensive body of work, particularly regarding its integration into broader tourism strategies (Christou *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, cultural influences are needed to understand how local traditions and global trends shape drink tourism practices (Knollenberg *et al.*, 2021). Addressing these gaps would enhance our understanding of drink tourism and its potential to drive economic, cultural, and regional development.

2.2 Intent to participate in tourism activities

The literature on intention to participate in tourism activities covers various factors influencing travellers' decision-making process. Research has shown that these factors can influence travel behaviour and the types of tourism activities individuals are likely to participate in (Abascal *et al.*, 2016; Ye *et al.*, 2014). Motivation plays a critical role in influencing the intention to participate in tourism activities. According to the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), motivation serves as a critical determinant of behaviour, influenced by various factors, including personal attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991). Research has indicated that diverse forms of motivation, such as adventure, relaxation, and education, significantly impact individual's intention to participate in different types of tourism activities (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Another factor that has been found to influence the intention to participate in tourism activities is the destination image. Destination image is defined as the overall perception of a destination held by potential tourists and can be influenced by various factors such as advertising, personal experiences, and word-of-mouth (Maghrifani *et al.*, 2021). Research has shown that a positive destination image can lead to an increased intention to participate in tourism activities, while a negative image can have the opposite effect (Chenini & Touaiti, 2018). Studies have also shown that food and alcoholic beverages play a significant role in the decision-making processes of tourists (Aziz *et al.*, 2023). Research by Knollenberg and colleagues (2021) found that food and beverage consumption significantly predicted tourists' satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Research also found that the quality of food and beverages was a key factor influencing tourists' revisit intentions (Okumus, 2021).

Various travel motivation theories have been extensively studied in the literature, including the allocentric-psychometric model, the optimal arousal model, the travel career ladder model, and the push-pull theory (Chen & Chen, 2015). Among these, the push-pull theory posits that a combination of internal factors, such as personal interests and goals, and external factors, such as destination attributes and features, drive travel motivation (Bruwer *et al.*, 2018). Researchers have widely adopted this theory, which will serve as our study's theoretical foundation.

2.3 A Push and Pull Perspective on the Intention to Participate in Whisky Tourism

The conceptual model tested in this paper is based on the Push and Pull theory of tourism. The theory is rooted in the work of Dann (1977), and it has been widely used in tourism research to understand tourists' motivations and decision-making processes (e.g., Bruwer *et al.*, 2018; Chen & Chen, 2015). This framework identifies the motivations that push the tourists away from their home location and the attractions that pull them to a specific destination.

In this research, the push factors refer to the internal motivations and factors that drive an individual to travel. In this case, the degree of whisky tourist and the degree of cultural tourist (i.e., the self-assessed level of culturally oriented tourist a person is (Williams & Kelly, 2001; Wong *et al.*, 2014) are considered the push factors that influence an individual's decision to travel. The degree of whisky tourist refers to the level of interest and motivation an individual has towards visiting whisky-related tourist destinations, while the degree of cultural tourist refers to the level of interest and motivation towards visiting cultural tourist destinations. On the other hand, the pull factors refer to the external attractions and opportunities that draw individuals to a particular destination.

The core whisky product and core cultural product are considered pull factors influencing an individual's decision to travel and function as attribute variables. These factors encompass the quality, variety, and accessibility of both whisky-related and cultural offerings. The term 'core' arises from the original constructs that served as the foundation for our study. As we can see in the work of Getz and Brown (2006), from which we adapted the measurement scales, the term 'core' refers to the essential

and fundamental aspects of the constructs under investigation. This refers to the central, indispensable features that encapsulate the core essence of each construct. By adopting the term 'core', we emphasised the central elements that represent the heart of the examined constructs. These core features are critical for understanding and capturing the essence of the phenomena under study and form the basis for our measurement approach.

This study explores the aforementioned push and pull factors influencing tourists' intention to participate in whisky tourism. The literature on whisky already highlights its significant role in tourists' decision-making process (Christou *et al.*, 2024; Murphy & Keaney, 2018), as it serves as a major motivation for tourists visiting Scotland, with opportunities to learn about the production process and visit distilleries identified as key factors influencing their travel decisions (Hindle *et al.*, 2015). It also holds considerable significance in the decision-making process of tourists visiting other destinations, such as Ireland (Murphy & Keaney, 2018). Additionally, the quality and reputation of whisky produced in a destination have been identified as critical factors in tourists' choice of destination (Christou *et al.*, 2024; Stokburger-Sauer, 2011). Whisky tourism can positively impact a destination's economy, as tourists involved in such activities typically spend more on accommodation, transportation, and other tourism-related activities (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016).

Additionally, the literature shows that attitudes towards whisky significantly influence the decision to participate in whisky-related activities. Individuals with a positive attitude towards whisky are more likely to participate in whisky tastings and visit distilleries (McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008). Social norms surrounding whisky consumption also impact participation, with individuals perceiving positive views of whisky within their social circle being more likely to engage in whisky tastings and distillery visits (Spracklen, 2011, 2014).

In summary, this research aims to examine whether whisky, as a cultural product, influences the intention to engage in whisky tourism-related activities. To achieve this, it is essential to understand and differentiate whisky and culture as distinct tourist products.

2.4 Culture as a tourism product

Culture and tourism have always been closely connected, with culture among the most valuable resources for a destination to attract visitors (Dai *et al.*, 2019). Cultural sights, attractions, and events motivate travel, and travel generates culture (McKercher, 2020). In recent times, the link between culture and tourism has been acknowledged as a unique type of usage, known as cultural tourism (Chen & Rahman, 2018). By the end of the twentieth century, numerous nations viewed cultural tourism as one of the most attractive advancements in the tourism industry (Dai *et al.*, 2019). Cultural tourism involves the temporary consumption of aestheticised sites in the pursuit of authentic or real experiences (Vergori & Arima, 2020). It is grounded in the heritage of a tourist site, including historical cultural artefacts, as well as the contemporary lifestyle of people in a specific location (Sotiriadis, 2015).

Research on culture as a tourism product has identified several key areas of focus. One such area examines the role of cultural heritage in tourism. Studies have found that cultural heritage sites and landmarks are often major tourist attractions, with tourists showing a willingness to spend more time visiting these sites (Chen & Chen, 2010). Research also indicates that the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage can provide economic benefits to local communities (Zhang & Smith, 2019). Another key area is arts and performance tourism, which includes activities such as attending theatrical productions, art exhibitions, or live music performances. These experiences often highlight a destination's creative or contemporary artistic activities, providing tourists with opportunities to immerse themselves in both traditional and modern cultural expressions (Zhang *et al.*, 2021).

An increasingly prominent area of focus is culinary and drink tourism, driven by an increasing interest in gastronomy and local food culture (Aziz *et al.*, 2023). It includes dining at local establishments, participating in cooking classes, or exploring specific food or drink traditions (Sujood *et al.*, 2024). Whisky tourism, for example, falls within drink tourism and represents a specialised niche. It connects visitors to the production processes, tasting experiences, and cultural stories tied to regional drinks, such as Scotch whisky in Scotland (Christou *et al.*, 2024). A different sub-segment is religious and spiritual tourism, which involves travelling to sites of spiritual significance, such as temples, churches, monasteries, and pilgrimage routes. Tourists in this category seek connections to faith, spirituality, or a deeper understanding of religious traditions, often aligning with personal or communal beliefs (Budovich, 2023). Additionally, studies have explored the impact of cultural festivals and events on tourism, finding that they can significantly attract tourists and stimulate economic activity in host communities (Chang & Ku, 2023). Furthermore, cultural festivals and events can promote cultural exchange and understanding between tourists and host communities (Laing, 2018).

Another research area has examined cultural tourism's role in destination branding and marketing. Studies have found that promoting a destination's unique cultural offerings can effectively differentiate it from competitors and attract tourists (Karagöz & Uysal, 2020; Peng *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, research has shown that incorporating local culture into tourism products and experiences can lead to more authentic and satisfying tourist experiences (Crespi-Vallbona, 2021). Finally, research has also examined the potential negative impacts of cultural tourism, such as the commodification of culture and the displacement of local communities. Studies have highlighted the importance of sustainable and responsible tourism practices to mitigate these negative impacts (Abascal *et al.*, 2016; Kim *et al.*, 2021). In this regard, we hypothesise that:

H1: Core cultural product is positively associated with the intention to participate in whisky tourism

If culture is considered a cultural product, the concept of the cultural tourist emerges. Cultural tourists are visitors who engage in cultural activities or event during their travels, regardless of their primary reason for visiting (McKercher, 2002). The main motivation is to gain knowledge about the destination. Key components of a destination's culture include arts, music, traditions, and history. Additionally, food and beverages are integral aspects of cultural tourism (Knollenberg *et al.*, 2021). Within cultural tourism, gastronomy tourism encompasses cookery courses, food and beverage tasting, and experiences with beverages such as wine, beer, craft drinks, and distilled alcoholic beverages, including whisky.

Cultural tourists are often categorised based on their level of interest. The concept of the degree of cultural tourist refers to the varying levels of engagement and motivation that tourists exhibit when participating in cultural tourism (Kusumah, 2024). In our framework, the degree of cultural tourist reflects the depth of a tourist's immersion in local culture. This extends a spectrum from surface-level experiences, such as visiting major monuments or attending cultural festivals, to more profound engagements, such as interacting with local communities, participating in traditional crafts, or pursuing educational experiences related to the history and customs of a destination (Konstantakis *et al.*, 2020). Different operational definitions have been used to categorise these tourists, ranging from those who engage in cultural activities occasionally to those for whom cultural tourism is the primary focus of their travel (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Vergori & Arima, 2020). The degree of cultural engagement also influences tourists' behaviours, such as spending patterns, length of stay, and likelihood of recommending the destination. For instance, more engaged cultural tourists are likely to spend more on local experiences and services that contribute to the preservation and continuation of local culture (Mele *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, the emotional, sensory, and social aspects of cultural experiences have been found to strongly influence tourists' satisfaction and their intention to revisit or recommend the destination (Peng *et al.*, 2023). As such, we posit that:

H2: Core cultural product is positively associated with the degree of cultural tourist

H3: The degree of cultural tourist is positively associated with the intention to participate in whisky tourism

H7: Core cultural product is positively associated with the intention to participate in whisky tourism mediated by the degree of cultural tourist

2.5 Whisky as a tourism product

Recently, whisky tourism has gathered considerable attention owing to its unique blend of cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and sensory experiences. Whisky, a globally renowned distilled spirit, has deep-rooted ties to Scotland, making it an attractive destination marketing asset (Clifton, 2014). Whisky tourism is relevant in destination marketing due to its potential to attract a diverse range of tourists, including connoisseurs, enthusiasts, and novices seeking immersive experiences. Distilleries and whisky-related attractions serve as magnets, drawing travellers to explore regions renowned for their whisky production, such as Scotland (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016).

Whisky tourism lacks a single, universal definition, and different authors have offered alternative views (Martin & McBoyle, 2006; McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008; Spracklen, 2011). This can include visiting distilleries to observe the production process or taste whisky (Spracklen, 2014), attending whisky festivals or visiting regions known for their whisky, where visitors can experience the unique lifestyle related to drinking whisky, including foods, activities, and landscapes (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016; Xu *et al.*, 2016). For this research, we define whisky tourism as the travel, entertainment, and sampling of products associated with whisky in a particular brand, region, or country.

Whisky is not just a beverage. It embodies cultural traditions and stories passed down through generations (Spracklen, 2011). The cultural identity associated with Scotch whisky is deeply connected with notions of authenticity, which appeal strongly to tourists seeking meaningful connections with local traditions. Distilleries and whisky trails offer both symbolic and experiential authenticity, as visitors engage with the heritage of whisky production while experiencing its natural and social settings (Thurnell-Read, 2019). This duality enhances the perceived authenticity of Scottish culture, making it a valuable commodity in the global tourism market. Distilleries such as those on the Malt Whisky Trail exemplify how whisky tourism blends heritage conservation with economic development, fostering both cultural pride and financial gain (Martin & Haugh, 1999). Moreover, the commodification of Scotch whisky emphasises the complex relationship between cultural narratives and tourism. The mythos of Scotch whisky, perpetuated through marketing and storytelling, often simplifies its cultural depth while increasing its global appeal (Christou *et al.*, 2024). These efforts demonstrate how cultural commodities like Scotch whisky can be employed for tourism that benefits both local communities and global travellers.

The literature has emphasised the importance of safeguarding and advancing whisky's cultural heritage amid globalisation (Christou *et al.*, 2024). Distilleries that embrace their historical roots and craftsmanship tend to attract tourists seeking authentic experiences, promoting a deeper comprehension of whisky production's cultural value (Barnard, 2013). Additionally, whisky tourism intersects with culinary tourism, offering visitors opportunities to pair whisky tastings with local cuisine. Whisky distilleries often collaborate with restaurants and food producers, enhancing the overall gastronomic experience for tourists. Moreover, distillery tours, hands-on workshops, and interactive experiences connect visitors deeper to the whisky-making process (Velasco *et al.*, 2013).

Whisky tourism has become increasingly popular lately, where individuals travel to destinations specifically to learn about and experience the production and culture of whisky (Knobloch *et al.*, 2017).

This phenomenon is driven by a growing interest in the history and artistry of whisky-making and the desire to taste and purchase unique and exclusive varieties (Kellershohn, 2022; McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008). This rise in whisky tourism presents opportunities for destinations to capitalise on this trend, promote their whisky heritage and industry, and for researchers to study the motivations and behaviours of whisky tourists (Christou *et al.*, 2024). However, it also raises questions about the potential impacts on local communities and the merits of this form of tourism (Kang *et al.*, 2022; Spracklen, 2014; Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016). Therefore, the current study posits that:

H4: Core whisky product is positively associated with the intention to participate in whisky tourism

Additionally, whisky tourists are often categorised based on their level of interest. Casual whisky tourists may enjoy a simple tasting or a scenic distillery tour, while dedicated whisky admirers seek more specialised experiences, such as private tastings with distillers or visits to lesser-known distilleries in remote regions (Kellershohn, 2022). These varying levels of engagement reflect a broader trend in tourism, where personalisation and immersive experiences are increasingly valued (Chen, 2024; Prandi *et al.*, 2023). As whisky tourism continues to grow, destinations are focusing more on offering diverse experiences tailored to different visitor types. Whether it's a straightforward distillery tour or a comprehensive whisky trail adventure, the type of whisky tourist is determined by the depth of their connection with whisky culture and heritage. So, we posit that:

H5: Core whisky product is positively associated with the degree of whisky tourist

H6: The degree of whisky tourist is positively associated with the intention to participate in whisky tourism

H8: Core whisky product is positively associated with the intention to participate in whisky tourism mediated by the degree of whisky tourist

Figure 1 depicts the proposed model with the hypothesised relationships.

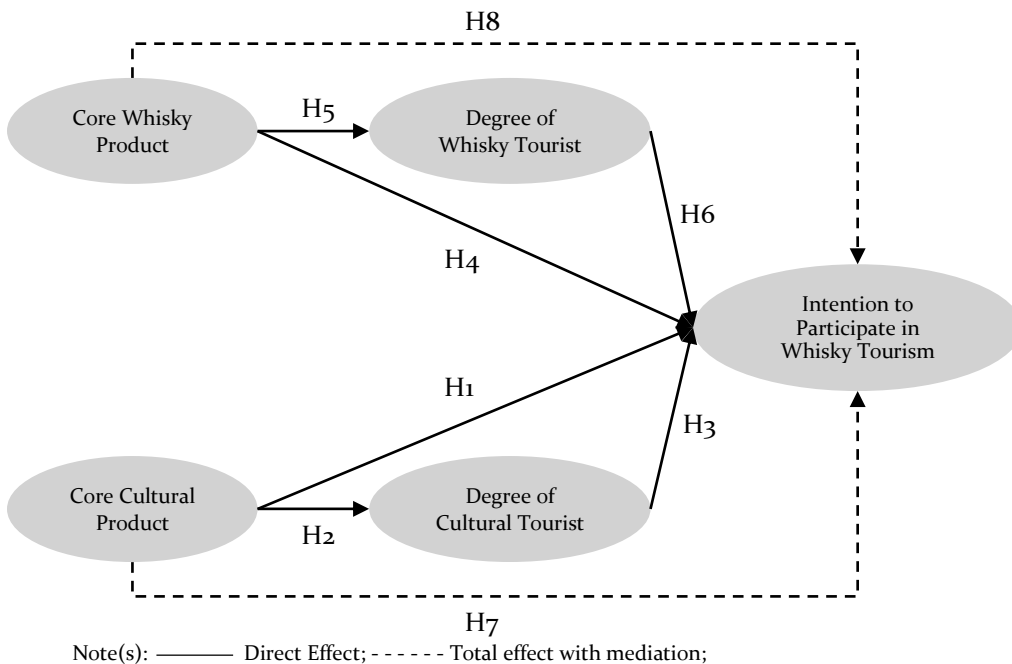


Figure 1. Proposed research model.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and procedure

Researchers recruited American travellers' participants for data collection through the SoGoSurvey web-based platform, following a methodology established in prior studies (e.g., Firth *et al.*, 2019; Tan *et al.*, 2022). American travellers represent Scotland's largest international source market, measured by the number of visits, nights, and overall spending. In 2022, U.S. visitors accounted for 21% of all overseas trips to Scotland and 38% of total overseas spending in the country (Euronews, 2023; VisitScotland, 2024). Participants were selected through a self-selection process with snowball effect (via web links and QR codes) between April and May 2023. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, a pilot test involving twenty respondents was conducted to verify the clarity of the questionnaire's content, design, and structure (Kock *et al.*, 2021). Minor adjustments were made to the wording of two items. Researchers created two initial screening questions in the survey to determine if the participants had prior experience travelling to Scotland and had experienced cultural whisky tourism. Respondents were required to (1) have been to Scotland in the last five years and (2) participate in a whisky tourism experience during the visit (i.e., distillery tour, whisky trail, tasting room, whisky festival, shopping for whisky, etc.) to qualify for participation in the study. We purposefully opted to select respondents with these specific characteristics, namely individuals with substantial knowledge and firsthand experience of destination and whisky tourism. This approach ensures that our participants possess authentic insights into the destination and the whisky tourism experience rather than merely relying on conjecture or general assumptions. Moreover, we deliberately chose not to include participants from the United Kingdom, as it is presumed that their cultural affinity with the destination and the product would be considerably higher than that of other visitors.

The estimated questionnaire completion time was approximately five minutes. Respondents were required to pass an attention question and complete the survey within one to ten minutes to be included in the analysis, consistent with previous research (Huang *et al.*, 2012). The data collection yielded 144 responses, and after excluding missing values and inconsistencies, the final sample comprised 121 participants, resulting in a completion rate of 84.03%. We also employed graphical methods to identify extreme multivariate outliers, using a residual scatter plot within ± 3 standard deviations from the mean (Hair *et al.*, 2010). No extreme outliers were detected, and no additional exclusions were necessary following this analysis.

Based on the G Power Analysis (Faul *et al.*, 2009), our sample size of 121 participants exceeds the required sample size of 107, achieving a statistical power of 0.95 with a 0.05 error probability. Therefore, our sample size meets the recommended minimum for sampling adequacy (Westland, 2010). The demographic profile of the sample is well-balanced: 51.24% of participants are male. Most respondents were aged between 18 and 29 (32.23%, $n=39$), followed by the 30 to 39 (23.14%, $n=28$), 40 to 49 (13.22%, $n=16$), 50 to 59 (15.7%, $n=19$), and 60 to 69 (11.57%, $n=14$). Five respondents were above 70 (4.13%, $n=5$). Educationally, a significant majority, 71.90%, reported having attained some level of college degree (i.e., Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral, or other advanced degrees).

3.2 Measures and Survey Questionnaire

All constructs were assessed using multi-item scales adapted from established literature (Diamantopoulos *et al.*, 2012). Our questionnaire was designed to minimise recall bias and common method bias, ensuring robust data quality (Kock *et al.*, 2021). To achieve this, several strategies were employed: (i) commitment techniques, such as prompting for conscientious responses; (ii) attention questions, for instance, asking participants to select a specific answer to confirm their attentiveness; and (iii) memory aids, such as prompting participants to recall specific details about their travel to Scotland (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

Furthermore, the questionnaire was structured to be concise and straightforward, avoiding unfamiliar terms and complex syntax to enhance clarity and reduce ambiguity (Tourangeau *et al.*, 2000). Each item maintains consistency with the original instruments, utilising a Likert-type scale to preserve content validity, as alterations in response formats could potentially compromise validity (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). To further ensure content validity, items measuring the same construct were strategically dispersed throughout the questionnaire rather than being grouped together (Mackenzie *et al.*, 2011; Weijters *et al.*, 2009).

All items in the questionnaire were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale. The core whisky product construct and core cultural product were adapted from Getz and Brown (2006) using a scale from 1 (of no importance) to 5 (very important). The degree of whisky tourist and the degree of cultural tourist were both adapted from McKercher (2002) using a scale from 1 (unimportant/did not influence the decision to visit) to 5 (the only/main reason to visit). Finally, the intention to participate in whisky tourism was measured using Mercedes Marzo-Navarro and Pedraja-Iglesias (2012) using a scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) (see Appendix A for the overview).

4. Results

4.1 Measurement results

A structural equation modelling (SEM) approach employing partial least squares (PLS) was utilised to test the proposed model, facilitated by SmartPLS 3.0 software. PLS-SEM was selected as the analytical method for this study due to its suitability for predictive modelling and its effectiveness with smaller sample sizes (Hair *et al.* 2019). The descriptive statistics are shown in Appendix B, and the suitability of the measurements is assessed by evaluating their reliability and validity. This involved examining several criteria: item loadings (both size and significance), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) for convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair *et al.* 2016).

Table 1. Measurement model.	FL	CR	AVE
Core cultural product (adapted from Getz and Brown, 2006)		0.829	0.619
We are interested in the importance you place on different features when making your decision about which distillery to visit:			
Unique accommodation with regional character	0.831		
Fine dining and gourmet restaurants	0.721		
Traditional whisky villages	0.803		
Core whisky product (adapted from Getz and Brown, 2006)		0.891	0.674
We are interested in the importance you place on different features when making your decision about which distillery to visit:			
Visitor friendly distillery	0.796		
Knowledgeable distillery staff	0.712		
Whisky festivals	0.886		
Familiar distillery	0.878		
Degree of cultural tourist (adapted from McKercher, 2002)		0.790	0.655
How important was cultural tourism in your decision to visit Scotland?	0.746		
How would you describe the cultural experience of your visit to Scotland?	0.868		
Degree of whisky tourist (adapted from McKercher, 2002)		0.841	0.725
How important was whisky tourism in your decision to visit Scotland?	0.880		
How would you describe the whisky experience of your visit to Scotland?	0.823		
Intention to participate in whisky tourism (adapted from Mercedes Marzo-Navarro and Pedraja-Iglesias, 2012)		0.871	0.692
I would like to get to know the production area of the whisky I usually drink	0.822		

I would like to get to know the production areas of the best whisky	0.845
I would like to participate in whisky tourism in the future	0.829

Note: FL - Factor loading; CR - Composite reliability; AVE - Average Variance Extracted

With respect to the measurement model, all loads of the items surpass the threshold of 0.708 (see Table 1). All composite reliability values are above 0.80 except 'Degree of cultural tourist', which is 0.79 (Wetzels *et al.*, 2009). The measures exhibit convergent validity, as the average variance extracted (AVE) for manifest variables within constructs is above 0.5. Therefore, the model demonstrates satisfactory intrinsic reliability and convergent validity values.

The discriminant validity of the measures can be assessed using multiple methods. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of AVE should be greater than the correlations between the construct and other constructs in the model, which was confirmed (see Table 2). Additionally, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was calculated to assess discriminant validity, showing values below 0.90 for all constructs in this study, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity (see Table 2).

Table 2. Discriminant validity.

Fornell & Larcker Criterion	1	2	3	4	5
1. Core cultural product	0.786				
2. Core whisky product	0.664	0.821			
3. Degree of cultural tourist	0.335	0.131	0.809		
4. Degree of whisky tourist	0.504	0.583	0.179	0.852	
5. Intention to participate in whisky tourism	0.415	0.424	0.387	0.218	0.832

HTMT Criterion	1	2	3	4	5
1. Core cultural product					
2. Core whisky product	0.898				
3. Degree of cultural tourist	0.531	0.238			
4. Degree of whisky tourist	0.805	0.804	0.316		
5. Intention to participate in whisky tourism	0.543	0.511	0.614	0.310	

4.2 Structural results

First, potential multicollinearity among the formative indicators was evaluated using variance inflation factor (VIF), revealing values below the threshold of 3.33 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006), indicating no significant multicollinearity issues in the structural model (Table 3). Next, a non-parametric bootstrapping procedure employing 5000 resampling was utilised to calculate the R square, path estimates, and corresponding t-values and to test the hypotheses (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3. Collinearity assessment for the structural model.

	VIF
Core cultural product	2.063
Core whisky product	2.143
Degree of cultural tourist	1.151
Degree of whisky tourist	1.581

Note: VIF (variance inflation factor) <3.3; dependent variable: Intention to participate in whisky tourism

The model's predictive power was assessed by evaluating our predictor variables' R² and Q² values (see Table 4). All Q² values for the endogenous constructs were positive (Degree of cultural tourist (DCT):

0.056; Degree of whisky tourist (DWT): 0.228; Intention to participate in whisky tourism (IPWT): 0.189), indicating their predictive relevance (Fornell & Cha, 1994). Moreover, the R^2 values exceeded the threshold of 0.10 (Falk & Miller, 1992) (DCT: 0.112; DWT: 0.340; IPWT: 0.305), indicating a strong level of predictive power. These findings support the model's predictive capability, suggesting a satisfactory overall fit of the structural model (Hair, Hult, *et al.* 2017).

The results of the structural model, as presented in Tables 4 and 5 and Figure 2, indicate that the data supports six of our hypotheses and does not support two. Hypothesis 1 examined if core cultural product positively influences intention to participate in whisky tourism, and our results do not support this hypothesis ($\beta=0.122$; $t=1.042$, $p>0.10$). On the contrary, our results show that core cultural product (CCP) positively influences the degree of cultural tourist ($\beta=0.370$; $t=3.845$, $p<0.001$), and that the DCT positively influences intention to participate in whisky tourism ($\beta=0.305$; $t=3.633$, $p<0.001$). Additionally, as postulated in hypothesis 4, core whisky product (CWP) positively influences intention to participate in whisky tourism ($\beta=0.402$; $t=3.973$, $p<0.001$), and CWP also positively influences the degree of whisky tourist ($\beta=0.591$; $t=9.187$, $p<0.001$). Finally, our results do not confirm H6, which postulates that the degree of whisky tourist positively influences intention to participate in whisky tourism ($\beta= -0.118$; $t=1.273$, $p>0.010$).

Table 4. Structural model results.

Direct effect	Beta	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	Bias Corrected Confidence Interval		Hypothesis
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
H1: CCP -> IPWT	0.122 ^{ns}	0.117	1.042	-0.125	0.330	Not supported
H2: CCP -> DCT	0.370 *	0.096	3.845	0.150	0.530	Supported
H3: DCT -> IPWT	0.305 *	0.084	3.633	0.142	0.468	Supported
H4: CWP -> IPWT	0.402 *	0.101	3.973	0.168	0.574	Supported
H5: CWP -> DWT	0.591 *	0.064	9.187	0.424	0.692	Supported
H6: DWT -> IPWT	-0.118 ^{ns}	0.093	1.273	-0.281	0.088	Not supported
	R ²	Q ²				
DCT	0.112	0.056				
DWT	0.340	0.228				
IPWT	0.305	0.189				

Note(s): * $p<0.001$; ns-not significant

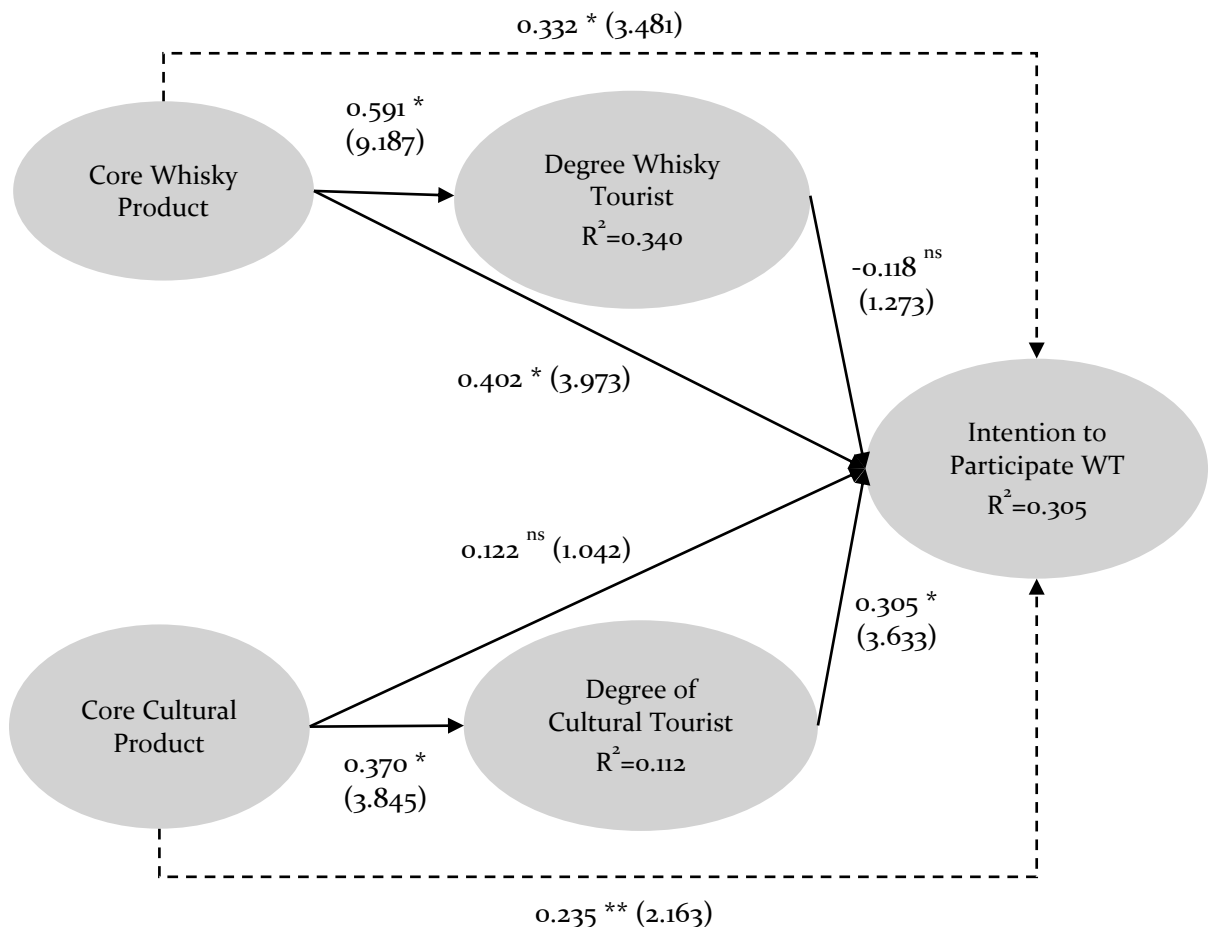
4.3 Mediating effects results

We applied the product-of-coefficients approach to assessing the significance of the total mediating effects by employing bootstrapping-based resample direct and indirect effects (Hayes and Scharkow 2013; Hair, Sarstedt, *et al.* 2017). Core cultural product (CCP) was found to exercise an indirect effect on the intention to participate in whisky tourism (IPWT) via the degree of cultural tourist (DCT) (coefficient = 0.113, 95% CI [0.041, 0.220]). Moreover, the total effect of CCP on IPWT via DCT was statistically significant (coefficient = 0.235, 95% CI [0.033, 0.454]), suggesting full mediation, even if the direct effect is not significant (Zhao *et al.*, 2010), and therefore supporting hypothesis 7. Additionally, core whisky product (CWP) was found not to exert an indirect effect on IPWT via the degree of whisky tourist (DWT) (coefficient = -0.070, 95% CI [-0.168, 0.054]), but the total effect of CWP on IPWT via DWT was statistically significant (coefficient = 0.332, 95% CI [0.136, 0.511]). Consequently, we deduce the existence of partial mediation, supporting hypothesis 8. Overall, our analyses suggest that both DCT and DWT are moderators influencing IPWT, confirming hypotheses 7 and 8 (see Table 5).

Table 5. Mediation hypothesis testing results.

	Indirect effect	T Statistics O/STDEV	Bias Corrected Confidence Interval		Total effect	T Statistics O/STDEV	Bias Corrected Confidence Interval		Hypothesis
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
H7: CCP -> DCT -> IPWT	0.113 **	2.509	0.041	0.220	0.235***	2.163	0.033	0.454	Supported
H8: CWP -> DWT -> IPWT	-0.070 ^{ns}	1.243	-0.168	0.054	0.332 *	3.481	0.136	0.511	Supported

Note(s): * p<0.001; ** p<0.02; *** p<0.05; ns-not significant



Note(s): _____ Direct Effect; - - - - - Total effect with mediation;

* p<0.001; ** p<0.05; ns-not significant; (t-value)

Figure 2. Results of path analysis.

5. Discussion

The significance of local food and beverages in influencing tourism has been widely recognised in the literature (Knollenberg *et al.*, 2021; Okumus, 2021; Stone *et al.*, 2017). This study seeks to contribute to this body of research by investigating the impact of whisky and culture as core products on the intention to participate in whisky tourism. Moreover, this research aims to examine the relationship between the degree of whisky tourist and the degree of cultural tourist and assess their influence on the intention to participate in whisky tourism. To achieve this, the researchers developed and tested a theoretical research model based on the push and pull theory to understand and identify these relationships.

The results of this study revealed that while core cultural products did not have a significant effect on the intention to participate in whisky tourism, the core whisky product did have a positive influence. These results highlight the significance of whisky as a key driver in attracting tourists to participate in whisky tourism. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that whisky, as a core product, can act as a key motivator for tourists to visit distilleries and experience the production process or taste the product (McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008; Spracklen, 2014). Moreover, the results of this study suggest that offering a unique and authentic whisky experience can be a powerful tool for destinations looking to attract tourists (Martin & McBoyle, 2006; Vergori & Arima, 2020). However, it should be noted that culture, as a core product, did not significantly impact the intention to participate in whisky tourism. This finding may suggest that while cultural elements such as food, landscape, and activities can add value to the whisky tourist experience (Flynn, 2020; Knollenberg *et al.*, 2021; Okumus, 2021), culture as an ethos may not be the primary motivator for tourists to participate in whisky tourism.

The findings of this study also provide valuable insights into how the degree of whisky tourist and the degree of cultural tourist influence the intention to participate in whisky tourism. Particularly, the results reveal a significant and unexpected discovery: individuals with a strong inclination towards cultural tourism tend to exhibit a heightened intention to engage in whisky tourism. This finding challenges the traditional view of whisky as merely a core product, suggesting that cultural familiarity plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' travel intentions related to whisky experiences (MacKenzie *et al.*, 2020). The full mediation observed between cultural affinity and the intention to participate in whisky tourism further underscores this relationship. These findings imply that individuals who self-identify as cultural tourists are more likely to be interested in whisky tourism, highlighting them as a key target demographic for destinations seeking to attract tourists in this niche.

Our findings underscore the importance of incorporating both whisky and cultural experiences into the marketing of whisky tourism, as these elements can significantly influence tourists' decision-making processes. On the contrary, being a whisky tourist is not enough to engage in whisky tourism. The results suggest that simply being a whisky tourist may not directly translate to an intention to participate in whisky tourism. This finding highlights the need to consider not just whisky as a product but also the specific associated interests when marketing whisky tourism destinations (Kang *et al.*, 2022; Kellershohn, 2022). This information can be valuable for destination managers in tailoring their marketing strategies and product offerings to target the right audience and increase the likelihood of success. Additionally, these results emphasise the need for destinations to attract a wider range of travellers and ensure their tourism offerings are diverse and appealing.

The study's results are consistent with the push and pull theory, which posits that internal and external factors influence travel decisions (Chen & Chen, 2015). The use of this theoretical framework has allowed us to gain valuable insights into the intricacies of tourists' motivations when it comes to visiting destinations renowned for producing cultural alcoholic beverages. Specifically, this study's findings suggest that internal factors, such as the degree of cultural tourist, can push individuals to travel to destinations known for producing cultural alcoholic beverages. Moreover, our investigation

underscores the role of external factors in attracting (pulling) tourists to these destinations, such as the core whisky product, which emerges as a particularly influential force that entices travellers to visit these destinations. Overall, our study contributes to a deeper understanding of the push and pull dynamics within cultural alcoholic beverage tourism by elucidating the interplay between internal motivations and external attractions.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Theoretical contributions

The results of this study have important theoretical implications for the field of tourism research. The findings highlight the differences between core whisky and core cultural product, suggesting that whisky may not be exclusively perceived as a cultural product. While both factors have the potential to influence tourists' intention to participate in whisky tourism, this study found that core cultural product and core whisky product have different effects on this intention. We argue that the motivations behind whisky tourism are not solely rooted in cultural attraction but may also stem from other factors, such as personal preferences and experiences with whisky. However, additional research is needed to delve into this aspect comprehensively.

Second, this study makes a novel contribution to the literature using the push and pull theory by examining a range of internal and external factors influencing the decision to participate in whisky tourism. Specifically, the results demonstrate the interplay between internal factors, such as the degree of cultural/whisky tourist, and external factors, such as core cultural/whisky product, in shaping the intention to participate in whisky tourism. This expands upon the existing literature by incorporating a broader range of factors that contribute as push/pull factors to travel decision-making. By embracing a broader and more inclusive spectrum of factors that act as both push and pull elements in travel decision-making, our research significantly enriches the existing knowledge base in this field. Therefore, our study provides a solid groundwork for future research in whisky tourism and, more broadly, in the domain of cultural beverage tourism.

Finally, this study has implications for the broader food and beverage tourism research field. While there has been extensive research on wine tourism, our study offers insights into whisky tourism and opens avenues for exploring other forms of cultural alcoholic beverage tourism. The findings indicate that motivations for participating in whisky tourism are not solely based on the cultural appeal of the product, but also on individual preferences and attitudes towards whisky and the experiences that it offers. This expands the current literature by highlighting the influence of various types of beverages in shaping touristic food and beverage motivations.

6.2 Managerial Implications

This study provides valuable insights for destination managers aiming to attract tourists to participate in whisky tourism, particularly destination managers. Based on the findings, there are several key managerial implications to consider. First, this study highlights the importance of focusing on core whisky products when attracting tourists to participate in whisky tourism. Our results indicate that whisky, as a core product, positively impacts the intention to participate in whisky tourism. Managers should concentrate on offering unique and authentic whisky experiences to attract tourists. Second, this study suggests that high-degree cultural tourists may be an important target audience for destinations that attract tourists to participate in whisky tourism. Although culture, as a core product, did not significantly impact intention, the results indicate that the degree of cultural tourist can impact the intention to participate in whisky tourism. Destination managers should consider targeting these audiences in their marketing efforts.

Finally, the results of our study may stimulate the interest of managers from other tourist regions with different types of cultural alcoholic beverages. Our findings suggest that it may be possible to generalise these results to other cultural alcoholic beverages, such as Porto wine, Bourbon, Tequila, Brandy/Cognac, Sherry, or others. However, additional research is necessary to establish these relationships, but there is a possibility that comparable associations could be found between these other cultural alcoholic beverages and the intention to engage in tourism related to these products. In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights for destination managers seeking to attract tourists to participate in whisky tourism. It emphasises the importance of providing unique and authentic whisky experiences, targeting cultural tourists specifically. Furthermore, the findings suggest potential applications to other heritage alcoholic beverages within the broader context of food and beverage tourism.

7. Limitations and future research

Despite the valuable insights offered by this study, it is crucial to acknowledge certain limitations. One limitation is related to the sample size and composition. The study's sample was confined to a specific region and cultural group, which may not accurately represent the perspectives and attitudes of individuals from other regions or cultures. Consequently, the generalisability of the study's findings to broader populations may be limited. Another limitation concerns the reliance on self-reported data collected through surveys, which could introduce social desirability bias. Participants may have been inclined to respond in a socially favourable manner rather than providing completely accurate information, potentially affecting the validity of the results. To address these limitations, future research should aim to replicate the study using a larger and more diverse sample from various cultural backgrounds. Employing different data collection methods beyond surveys could also enhance the robustness of the findings. This approach would not only help validate the study's results across different populations but also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how whisky and cultural factors influence the intention to participate in whisky tourism. Furthermore, future research could explore additional demographic, socio-economic, and cultural factors that may influence the relationship between whisky, culture, and intention to participate in whisky tourism.

The future research avenues offered by this study include exploring the potential generalisability of the results to other cultural alcoholic beverages and investigating other factors that may influence the intention to participate in whisky tourism. One important area of future research is to expand the current findings to other heritage alcoholic beverages, such as Porto wine, Bourbon, Tequila, Brandy/Cognac, or Sherry, among others. This type of research would provide valuable insights into the potential generalisability of the results and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the role that cultural alcoholic beverages play in attracting tourists.

In addition to exploring the generalisability of the results, future research should also examine other factors influencing the intention to participate in whisky tourism. This could include examining the core destination appeal (Getz & Brown, 2006), which refers to the unique characteristics of a destination that make it appealing to tourists. For example, a region's cultural and historical significance may significantly attract tourists interested in whisky. Another important area of future research is investigating the impact of core heritage products on the intention to participate in whisky tourism (Getz & Brown, 2006). Heritage products are intrinsic to a region or culture and have historical and cultural significance. Understanding the impact of these products on the intention to participate in whisky tourism may provide valuable insights for destination managers looking to promote their region as a whisky tourism destination. Finally, the impact of travel philosophies on the intention to travel is another important area of future research. Travel philosophies refer to the values, beliefs, and motivations that drive individuals to travel. Understanding how different travel philosophies impact

the intention to participate in whisky tourism may provide valuable insights for destination managers looking to promote their region as a whisky tourism destination.

In summary, this paper lays the groundwork for future research on whisky tourism and its determinants of intention to participate. Further studies are needed to validate the findings across different contexts, to deepen our understanding of the role cultural alcoholic beverages play in tourist attraction, and to pinpoint the critical factors influencing intention to participate in whisky tourism.

Appendix

Measurement scales in use

Constructs	Items	Scale Source	Scale in use
Core whisky product	We are interested in the importance you place on different features when making your decision about which distilleries to visit: • Visitor-friendly distilleries • Knowledgeable distillery staff • Whisky festivals • Familiar distilleries	Getz & Brown (2006)	1 (of no importance) to 5 (very important)
	We are interested in the importance you place on different features when making your decision about which distilleries to visit: • Unique accommodation with regional character • Fine dining and gourmet restaurants • Traditional whisky villages		
Degree of whisky tourist	How important was whisky tourism in your decision to visit Scotland? How would you describe the whisky experience of your visit to Scotland?	McKercher (2002)	1 (unimportant/did not influence the decision to visit) to 5 (the only/main reason to visit)
Degree of cultural tourist	How important was cultural tourism in your decision to visit Scotland? How would you describe the cultural experience of your visit to Scotland?		
Intention to participate in whisky tourism	I would like to get to know the production area of the whisky I usually drink I would like to get to know the production areas of the best whisky I would like to participate in whisky tourism in the future	Marzo-Navarro, M., & Pedraja-Iglesias, M. (2012)	1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree)

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