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Scotchwhisky101.com: A User-Friendly, Persona-Driven Website

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SCOTCHWHISKY101.COM:
A USER-FRIENDLY, PERSONA-DRIVEN WEBSITE

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts
with Mahurin Honors College Graduate Distinction at
Western Kentucky University

By
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May 2020

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ABSTRACT

Within the realm of web design and marketing, it is easy for the designer to get caught up in what he/she thinks the site needs to look like. The problem is that web users are trying to accomplish specific tasks, and websites need to be tailored towards these users, not towards the designer. To work on this problem, I chose to make a website entitled “scotchwhisky101.com.” Most websites about single malts are too information-heavy and/or outdated. I used this problem to learn methods of user-oriented web design. To achieve this end, I gathered data through a survey. I then took this survey and created three personas of possible user segments, similar to those that marketing professionals use, with the data I collected. Through these personas, I was able to tailor my website’s design, content, and focus to match the demographic of new scotch enthusiasts. This method of research and design is useful for both marketers and web designers because it allows the end customer to be the primary influencer of the website’s creation. Through user persona-driven design, developers can ensure maximum customer engagement and satisfaction while remaining rhetorically sensitive.

I dedicate this capstone to Lauren Sheppard, who somehow enjoys listening to me ramble about whiskey for hours on end. I also dedicate this capstone to Dr. Daniel Liddle, whose enthusiasm and support have been invaluable.

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First, I'd like to thank my parents, Lauren Sheppard, her parents, Bailey Cooke, Madeline Kinser, Mary Johnson, Dr. Rob Hale, Dr. Wes Berry, and Dr. Ted Hovet. You all have been gracious and attentive when listening to my ramblings about whiskey, and you have encouraged my enthusiasm. I would also like to thank Clay Risen for writing his book, *Single Malt: A Guide to the Whiskies of Scotland*. It was a great help in creating this project. Lastly, I would like to thank all the distilleries and producers of not just scotch, but of all whiskies, particularly bourbon and rye. The product you create and market is not just about alcohol; it is about community, interest, enthusiasm, and life.

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INTRODUCTION

The Design Problem

Within the realm of web design and marketing, it is easy for the designer to get caught up in what he/she thinks the site needs to look like. The problem is that web users are trying to accomplish specific tasks, and websites need to be tailored towards these users, not towards the designer. Several studies have shown that “while preaching the importance of practicing user-centered concepts, many organizations fail to consider the consumer needs as the focal point of their design processes” (Miaskiewicz & Kozar, 2011). If web designers and marketers want to maximize customer engagement, and if they want to appropriately understand their market, the focus of web design must be centered on the user, not the creator.

Topic Choice

To work on this problem, I have designed a website about single malt scotch whisky, entitled Scotchwhisky101.com. First and foremost, this area of business is where I wish to end up in my career. I am deeply interested in the world of whisky, and it is my goal to be involved in the marketing aspect of the bourbon industry in the near future. Secondly, as a person who recently became interested in scotch, I found the available websites about the subject lacking. Existing sites, such as maltmadness.com and scotchmaltwhisky.co.uk, are entirely too text heavy, offer little sense of visual hierarchy to guide the user to desired information, and cover information in an entirely too specific and detailed manner (see Appendix A for examples of this issue). Given my interest in

the topic and the opportunity to create a new, functional site, it seemed like an appropriate path to take for this project.

Summary of Project

To begin with, I gathered data through a survey. I then took this survey and created three personas of possible user segments, similar to those that marketing professionals use, with the data I collected. Through these personas, I was able to tailor my website's design, content, and focus to match the demographic of new scotch enthusiasts. In line with these personas, I created three design principles that I abided by when designing the website.

This website is dedicated to providing everyone with a simple, no-nonsense introduction to the world of single malt scotch whisky. The goal of this site is to show that scotch whisky is an accessible hobby that does not need to be intimidating to newcomers. There is a large potential to get lost in the detail and exclusivity of scotch; this website seeks to avoid that. Enjoying scotch does not need to feel like being part of an exclusive club. To accomplish this goal, this website is different from other scotch websites in several ways:

- This is not an online marketplace. It is purely for information and guidance.
- All the bottles explored in this site are commonly found and reasonably priced.

There are no limited edition bottles or anything over \$600 discussed on this website.

- Only single malt scotch is discussed. The world of blended scotch is too large to be explored in a single site.
- All technical terms are explained and accessible.
- Information is detailed but not overwhelmingly so.

The website is divided into four main sections. The first section is an “About this Site” page that focuses on explaining the purpose of the website and also serves as a “jumping-off point” for the rest of the site. The second section covers how single malt scotch is made. It has a page of information defining scotch and then an interactive slideshow that goes over the various steps of creating scotch whisky. The third section covers the six regions of whisky-making in Scotland. Each region has a page with information and links to each distillery page in that region. The final section is an alphabetical list of all the distilleries in Scotland that produce single malt scotch. Each distillery has a separate page that includes information about the distillery along with notes about common bottles produced by each distillery.

Due to time constraints and to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to perform any usability testing for the website; however, I have included a section in this report where I discuss what I would have implemented if I were able to do such a test and how the test might have influenced design revisions.

SURVEY & PERSONAS

Research on Personas

To begin with, it is important to define what a persona is in the context of user-centered design. “Personas are fictional user archetypes based on user research. Through a process of analysis and refinement, the data from user interviews is distilled into one or multiple fictitious characters. Each character is developed in realistic detail” (Long, 2009). There are two sides to using personas in design: the designer experience and the user experience. To the designer, the use of personas provides not only an idea of what a website user may look like, but it also “makes explicit... assumptions about the target audience. Once created, they help to keep the assumptions and decision-making criteria explicit” (Grudin & Pruitt, 2002). With personas to reference, designers are able to defer to the end user on design decisions. The creation and implementation of features are geared towards the consumer, not the designer.

Secondly, “personas can introduce empathy into the design process, which can improve the functionality of the product for the user” (Friess, 2012, p. 1210). By encouraging designers to utilize personas in web design, supervisors can put a face to the process. Designers can use personas to get into the minds and emotions of the end user and to discover their intentions. Keeping these aspects of the target market in mind, it helps designers to create an experience that is better tailored toward the end user. Given these researched benefits of personas, and given that this type of research is valued in the world of marketing and rhetoric, I decided to use this method of target market analysis to drive the designing process for Scotch Whisky 101.

Survey Method

To gather the data I needed to create user personas, I created a survey. The survey was performed online via Google Forms. It is important to note that, at no point throughout the survey process did I know or ask for any of the names of respondents, and each response was totally anonymous through the whole process. I spread the survey via multiple channels. First, I told people about it via word of mouth. Second, I posted the link to the survey on the social forum website Reddit in the “Whiskey” subreddit community. I consulted with the moderators of the forum and sent them my initial thesis proposal. After reviewing my project, they allowed me to post the link to the survey on the forum. Third, I emailed the forum to a few contacts who I knew were scotch-drinkers.

The survey was split into two main sections. One section covered quantitative data, and the other covered qualitative data. In the quantitative data section, I asked questions about demographics and about scotch-related experiences, and respondents answered by selecting one of the provided choices. The demographic questions regarded age, gender, estimated annual income, state of residence, and ethnicity. The scotch related questions were as follows: “How often do you drink scotch whisky?”; “How long have you been drinking scotch whisky?”; and “What are your top three concerns when buying scotch whisky? (Check maximum of three).” The qualitative section of the survey also dealt with scotch-related experiences, but the questions were more open ended. The questions for this section were as follows: “What is your reason for choosing to drink scotch whisky over other alcoholic beverages? (Ex. Beer, Wine, Rum, Bourbon, Tequila, Vodka, etc.)”; “Why do you personally enjoy drinking scotch whisky?”; “Do you remember the first time you had scotch whisky? If so, please describe that experience.”; “What do you think is the

biggest barrier to more people enjoying scotch whisky?"; and "What do you wish you would have known when you first started drinking scotch whisky?" I let the survey run for approximately two weeks before collecting responses.

Data Results & Analysis

As I move forward in using the data collected from my survey, it is important to note what role the data plays, its limitations, what I would have done differently in the survey given unlimited resources. I have listed the quantitative data in a table below to give a concise overview of the information my survey collected.

TABLE 1

Category/Question	Top Response	Second Response	Third Response
Age	26-35 (43.9%)	45-60 (24.4%)	21-25 (14.6%)
Gender	Male (90.2%)	Female (9.8%)	N/A
Estimated Annual Income	\$50,000-\$75,000 (36.6%)	\$25,000-\$50,000 (14.6%)	\$75,000-\$100,000 (12.2%)
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree (41.5%)	Post-Graduate Degree (39%)	High School Diploma (12.2%)
Ethnicity (Select all that apply)	Caucasian (95%)	Hispanic or Latino (7.5%)	Native American (5%)
Location	California (20%)	Kentucky (20%)	Illinois (17.1%)
How often do you drink scotch whisky?	Several times per month (43.9%)	Several times per week (22%)	Once per week (19.5%)
How long have you been drinking scotch whisky?	0-2 Years (39%)	3-7 Years (29.3%)	15 Years or More (17.1%)
What are your top three concerns when buying scotch whisky? (Check maximum of three)	Flavor (97.6%)	Price (70.7%)	Trying New Products (58.5%)

This quantitative data gives me a better idea of what type of person would likely get into scotch whisky. From this data, the target consumer for this website would be a white male, age 26-35. He would be middle class with a four-year degree and likely living either on the west coast or in the southeast United States. He will be relatively new to the hobby of scotch, have a drink several times per month, and be primarily concerned with the flavor of scotch when buying it. Apart from taking the most frequently given answers for an ideal persona, this chart also gives me an idea of secondary factors to take into consideration when designing personas and when designing the website. For example, over half of respondents are concerned about price and about trying new things when searching for scotch. Also, the combined total responses from the survey indicate that 80.5% of scotch-drinkers have a four-year degree or higher. These pieces of information will help when deciding the content and language of my website. For example, due to the high degree of college-educated respondents, I can use more complex sentence structures in the website's text within reason.

I also asked qualitative questions in the survey to get a retrospective idea from participants of what newcomers to scotch may want to know about the drink. To find commonalities among these answers, I took the responses from each question and ran them through a word cloud generator to find the top five words and/or topics used in each question's total responses. I have listed these questions and top words in the table on the next page.

TABLE 2

Question	Word Cloud Results
What is your reason for choosing to drink scotch whisky over other alcoholic beverages? (Ex. Beer, Wine, Rum, Bourbon, Tequila, Vodka, etc.)	Flavor, Profile, Taste, Enjoy, Experience
Why do you personally enjoy drinking scotch whisky?	Taste, Flavors, Experience, Time, Complexity
Do you remember the first time you had scotch whisky? If so, please describe that experience.	Like, Experience, Smoky, Palate, Hated
What do you think is the biggest barrier to more people enjoying scotch whisky?	Price, Misconceptions of Peat & Heavy Flavors, High Alcohol Content, Intimidation from Vast Knowledge & Options, Complexity
What do you wish you would have known when you first started drinking scotch whisky?	Different, Flavors, Price, Enjoy, Variety

This qualitative data gives me a better idea of what type of information to include in the website as well as what type of elements to include in design. For example, the top reasons that respondents enjoy drinking scotch whisky is for taste and flavors. In my site, I will include typical flavor profiles for each scotch region to outline this exact concern. Additionally, the largest barrier respondents said prohibits people from enjoying scotch is price. In my site, I focus solely on commonly accessible, relatively inexpensive bottles that producers regularly make.

My initial reaction to the data includes both surprises and expected results. For example, I was not surprised to learn that the overwhelming majority of scotch drinkers are male. Scotch has long been perceived as an exclusively masculine hobby. There are several things that surprised me about the data too. For example, I did not expect the

majority of scotch drinkers to be age 26-35. I expected an older audience due to the perceived sophistication of the hobby. This information will impact my site by causing the design to be more technologically capable, making use of features such as inter-site links and interactive slideshows. Also, I was surprised to find that the overwhelming majority of scotch drinkers have a bachelor's degree or higher. I expected the majority of drinkers to be educated, but not to the degree that the survey indicates. This will impact my design by allowing me to use more educated language without fear of sounding pretentious.

Finally, it is important to note that this data reflects limitations in the survey. For example, I was not able to get responses from my ultimate intended audience—those who wish to become new scotch drinkers—but rather from people who already drink scotch. This factor, while sufficient for putting together an adequate picture of my audience, hinders me from gaining a completely accurate portrayal of my audience. Second, due to the locality in which I spread the survey by word of mouth (Bowling Green, Kentucky), there was a disproportionate amount of people that responded from Kentucky. This piece of data on the survey may not be indicative of where most scotch drinkers in the USA are located. With these limitations acknowledged, I still have enough data to argue that new scotch drinkers would fall into a certain demographic, and I have the data I need to create personas.

If I could perform this survey with no limitations and unlimited resources, I would have made sure the only people who responded were those that match my intended audience exactly, and I would have distributed it to a wider audience to gain more responses.

Persona Creation

With the data results collected and analyzed from the survey, I created three personas to represent the target market for Scotch Whisky 101. In addition to the research I reviewed regarding what personas entail, I used a real-world example on which to base my personas. Chick-fil-a utilizes personas to represent their target markets, and I used their model as a starting-off point for my personas (See Appendix B for an example of their personas).

I created a total of three personas. All three personas are located in Appendix C for reference. Along with a name and picture, I fleshed out these personas by including the following information: background, demographics, identifiers (character traits), goals, challenges, reasons for looking into scotch, apprehensions about scotch, what I can do in the website for them, and current most-played artists on Spotify. The first persona, Jameson Scott, represents a conglomeration of the most-answered responses in the survey. The second persona, Mike Higgins, mostly utilizes secondary responses to represent a secondary audience. The third persona, Chris Beckett, utilizes responses and features from seasoned scotch drinkers to represent somebody who already knows about scotch and is not new to the hobby. The purpose for creating Chris was to give me a reference of who to *not* design the website for. Throughout the course of designing the site, if design choices seemed like something tailored toward Chris, I took a second look at the decision.

Design Principles

Finally, to complement the survey data and the personas, I created three design principles to adhere to while creating the website. (See Appendix D for these principles). The concept of these principles comes from the book *The User Experience Team of One: A Research and Design Survival Guide* by Lead Buley. According to Buley, “design principles are a tool to help you clarify what personality is right for your product, and then to ensure as you progress that you are designing an experience with this personality” (Buley, 2013, p. 157). To create these principles I used qualitative data from my survey to surmise what sort of “personality” the website should have. The three principles I created are as follows: “It is not an overwhelming clutter of stuff”; “Information is detailed yet uncomplicated”; and “It is focused on the common and accessible.” Each of these principles is accompanied by 1-2 sentences of additional explanation, and each principle is followed by three “implications,” or concrete actions I took when designing the website to make sure I adhered to these principles.

With the survey data, user personas, and design principles, I was more than equipped to design a user-friendly and user-driven website experience about single malt scotch whisky.

WEB DESIGN

Data Collection

Before the process of creating and designing the website could start, I had to collect the data required. The vast majority of this data constituted images and information about various bottles of scotch. The first step I took was to create a spreadsheet of distilleries and their bottles. Staying within my design principles and personas, I only gathered data for bottles that are commonly found and are part of distilleries' "core expressions," and I only focused on bottles that are \$600 or less. This price may seem high, but there are thousands of limited editions bottles that soar to exorbitant prices out there. This limitation is well within the design principles and personas.

For each bottle, I acquired three pieces of information: ABV (alcohol by volume), price range, and tasting notes. I collected tasting notes directly from the distilleries themselves. This decision ensures that tasting notes are not my subjective opinion and are consistent with what customers would see when purchasing a bottle. For the price range, I implemented a system similar to that of Clay Risen's in his book *Single Malt: A Guide to the Whiskies of Scotland*. I acknowledge this inspiration in the website and provide a link to the Amazon page for his book. For each bottle, I looked up the price on four different websites: Total Wine, The Whisky Exchange, Master of Malt, and the producer's website (when available). I then averaged out the price of the bottle and represented it on the website with dollar signs ranging from one to four. The system is as follows: \$=\$50 or

less; \$\$=\$51-90; \$\$\$=\$91-200, \$\$\$\$=\$200-600. To see a screenshot of this data spreadsheet, see Appendix E.

After this data was collected, I worked on acquiring images. All images for distilleries, regions, and the “How It’s Made” page were acquired via Google Images, and all image searches were filtered for either “Labeled for Reuse” or “For Commercial Use.” For bottle images, all images came from the online marketplace The Whisky Exchange. Under Free Use, I am able to use these images due to the noncommercial nature of my website. Choosing images from this source also helps to ensure uniformity of bottle images. Additionally, I acquired distillery logos from The Whisky Exchange. I used these logos as links to each distillery page from the Regions page and from the Distilleries Index page.

I also drew inspiration for certain design elements from various producer websites. Two examples of this inspiration are as follows. First, on the “How It’s Made” page of the website, I designed an interactive slideshow that details the process of how scotch whisky is produced. This idea came from the Kilchoman Distillery website where they have an interactive slideshow detailing their process. Secondly, each distillery page features a large banner with an image of the distillery overlaid by the distillery’s name. This idea came from scotchwhisky.com where they start each distillery page with a banner image. These two design choices fall in line with my design principles and personas; they are amply spaced for a noncongestive web experience, and they offer task-oriented guidance for users.

Layout of the Website

The website is laid out in such a way as to provide task-oriented guidance for users. For example, the homepage is a single-screen, non-scrolling page. It features a single image, the title of the website, and a link that reads “Click Here to Get Started!” The website is structured in such a way to where somebody can navigate to a specific page if they desired, but new and unfamiliar users can start on the homepage and be directed through the entire site. Each pathway leads to the next page, following this order: homepage, “How It’s Made,” regions page, and distilleries page. Each page also features links that go to the next and previous pages in that category. For example, on a distillery page, there are links with directive arrows to the next and previous distillery pages, organized in alphabetical order.

Every facet of the website was influenced by the user personas and by design principles. After all, this website is tailored ultimately toward the end user, not the designer. On the next pages are tables for each of the two user personas, directive design options from those personas, and examples of those options being implemented in my website.

Jameson Scott

TABLE 3

Design Option	Example(s)
<p>Make information accessible and unpretentious</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . (From Islands Region Page) “Due to their location, many island whiskies have notes that remind you of the coast: salty sea-spray, seaweed, driftwood, and iodine. Most island whiskies are also lightly to moderately peated, making them smoky. These notes may sound abrasive, but when combined with other notes of honey, citrus, flowers, and fruit, you get a whisky that is a treat to drink and share.” . Each distillery page begins with the founding date and location for consistency and accessibility. Each description also ends with common flavors from that brand. . Hard-to-pronounce distillery names have pronunciation guides at the beginning of their descriptions (Example: Auchentoshan, ah-ken-toe-shun) . (From the BenRiach page) “The distillery is currently owned by Brown-Forman, the company responsible for Woodford Reserve Bourbon and Jack Daniels Tennessee Whiskey.”
<p>Pay attention to detail while also not overwhelming with detail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Typical flavor profile diagrams on each region page . (From the BenRiach page) “The distillery is currently owned by Brown-Forman, the company responsible for Woodford Reserve Bourbon and Jack Daniels Tennessee Whiskey.” . (From the Glenfiddich page) “In Scots Gaelic, its name means "valley of the deer," hence their logo. Glenfiddich has always had a spirit of innovation. During American Prohibition, Glenfiddich doubled production in the face of uncertainty, and when Prohibition finally ended, they had plenty of stock to sell to America.”

Mike Higgins

TABLE 4

Design Option	Example(s)
Implement UX design to maximize task guidance	<p>. Non-scrolling home page with “Get Started” link and clear links to sections on each page</p> <p>. Each region and distillery page have clear arrows that link to the previous and next page</p>
Emphasize personal and social benefits of scotch	<p>. (From Islands Region Page) “Due to their location, many island whiskies have notes that remind you of the coast: salty sea-spray, seaweed, driftwood, and iodine. Most island whiskies are also lightly to moderately peated, making them smoky. These notes may sound abrasive, but when combined with other notes of honey, citrus, flowers, and fruit, you get a whisky that is a treat to drink and share.”</p>
Sounds too complicated; Make information accessible and unpretentious	<p>. (from Highlands Region page) “From the light-bodied, citrus & salt-tinged whiskies of Old Pulteney to the full-bodied, rich, sherry-aged whiskies of Glengoyne, there is something in the Highlands for everybody.”</p>
Do not focus on high-priced scotch	<p>. Each distillery page displays core bottles from lowest priced to highest priced. Also, despite many bottles of scotch reaching thousands of dollars in value, the price cap for bottles explored on the website is \$600.</p>
Make information accessible with little to no jargon	<p>. Descriptions that use technical terms have links to simple, accessible lightboxes that define the term</p>

As is evident, the personas and design principles played a chief role in key design issues on both the micro and macro level. The implementation of these personas ensures that this website is ultimately geared toward the researched target user market.

USABILITY TESTING

Unfortunately, due to time constraints and to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to perform a proper usability test on this website; however, this section will detail what I would have done for a usability test, how the test would have connected back to the personas and design principles, and how the design might have changed based on feedback from the test.

Method

The usability test would have been a task-oriented, retrospective probing procedure. This type of usability test “involves asking users a series of questions about their experience with a system immediately after they have completed a task or series of tasks with a system” (Birns et al., 2002, p. 2). An advantage to this option is that it lets the user perform the tasks required without anxiety caused by a proctor. It also allows for a more reflective experience of not only individual tasks, but of the usability of the website as a whole.

I would have tested for five main tasks, each one associated with both navigation and readability. The tasks are as follows:

1. Navigate to the Lagavulin Distillery page
2. Find the tasting notes for a bottle of Glenfiddich 12 Year Old
3. Discover the typical flavor profile for a Highlands Region scotch
4. Navigate to the “How It’s Made” slideshow and read about mashing

5. Navigate to a bottle on a distillery page and discover what the price range means

The users would perform each of these tasks, and after each individual task, they would be given the following statement: Overall, this task was easy to complete. They would then circle a number 1-5, one being “Strongly Agree” and five being “Strongly Disagree.” After they complete all five tasks, they would answer three retrospective, qualitative questions. These questions would be as follows: “What do you like best about this website?”; “What do you like least about this website?”; and “What, if anything, would you change about this website?” This combination of quantitative and qualitative data would give me both an easy number average to rate the website’s usability with as well as detailed reasons for why the usability is good or bad.

This test would have been performed on ten individuals. This number would allow me to average the quantitative ratings into a manageable number, and it would also allow for a reasonable time frame; it is enough individuals to get real, diverse results and insights but not too much as to create an unmanageable pool of data. Ideally, these ten people would be selective to reflect the end user as specified by the survey data and personas.

Possible Implications

Depending on the results from the usability test, I might have implemented changes to the UX design of the website, or I may have done nothing. For example, if the task of navigating to the “How It’s Made” slideshow was consistently rated as difficult, I could have moved the slideshow closer to the top of the page. The quantitative questions asking to rate the easiness of specific tasks would have mainly had implications on

specific tasks in the website. The data from these ratings would have caused me to change the processes of completing specific tasks such as navigation and searching.

The three qualitative questions would have had broader implications on website changes. For example, if someone responded with a complaint about the website's lack of direction, I would have gone back and made links more visible and accessible by highlighting, underlining, moving them around on the page, etc. Conversely, if someone responded positively about the use of white space on certain pages vs. others, I would have gone back and tried to make other pages more closely resemble the use of white space on the favorable page. This usability test goes to show that not only would I have administered a measurable test, but it also shows that, again, the main concern here is the end user, and that user is based on primary research.

CONCLUSION

Scotch Whisky 101 is ultimately a project about user-experience designing backed by primary research. Through the course of this project, I have learned about persona creation, design principles, survey data analysis, web design, and usability testing. I poured hundreds of hours into research and design. I have based this project and the website on user data, and I have implemented this data in concrete, measurable ways. This website, while borne of a passion, is not tailored for myself; rather, I have created a website that is tailored towards an end user, and this end user is not simply one that I created in my mind, but one that is backed by research and data. Overall, this project was a sufficient exercise in research and design, and it is a sufficient example of an appropriate honors capstone experience.

As I enter the world after graduation, this project will come with me as a valuable asset. It is my hope to enter into the bourbon or scotch industry. My goal is to become a marketer or public relations specialist of some kind such as a brand manager. The skills I have learned from this project will be directly and primarily useful in my career aspirations.

However, ultimately, I just want to be involved in the process. Whisky is something that I love and cherish. It fascinates me with its processes and incredibly variable results. It astonishes me with its complex range of flavors. Most of all, it warms my heart with its beautiful facilities, inspiring locations, and genuine people. I am dedicated to spreading its impact through whatever work I can. I hope this project reflects my sentiment in a real and credible way.

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APPENDIX A

The **Tomintoul** distillery has always been focused on producing malt whisky for various blends, but in recent years it has become more widely available as a single malt - both as official and independent bottlings. Based on my own impressions, the quality of the whisky that's produced at Tomintoul is a few notches above that of most other malt whiskies aimed at blenders.

The distillery is located in the 'Strath Avon', the valley of the river Avon. Like the eskimo's have many different words for snow, the Scots apparently have many words for valley - and they usually use the word 'Glen'. So, the name of the area might have been 'Glen Avon' just as well. In fact, that's the name for a range of 'bastard' malts from Italy, imported by Sestante. The region is called 'Avonside' on the labels of those bottles, by the way...



The Tomintoul distillery is one of the **more recent additions** to Scotland's brigade of malt whisky distilleries. In fact, Tomintoul is one of only fifteen (operational) distilleries that were built in the second half of the 20th century - the others being **Allt-A-Bhainne** (built in 1975), **Arran** (1993), **Auchroisk** (1974), **Braeval** (1974), **Deanston** (1966), **Glenallachie** (1967), **Glenfiddich** (1959), **Isle of Jura** (1963), **Loch Lomond** (1966), **Macduff** (1962), **Mannochmore** (1972), **Speyside** (1990), **Tannatavull** (1965) and **Tomintoul** (1960). Tomintoul may not be among the top scoring malts on the **Malt Maniacs Matrix**, but looking at its contemporaries it performs quite well...

Tomintoul was founded as recently as 1964 by two whisky traders from Glasgow, W. & S. Strong & Co. and Hay & MacLeod & Co. They managed Tomintoul through a company named Tomintoul Distillery Ltd. Production at Tomintoul started in July 1965 and continued under the first owners for almost a decade. In 1973 the Scottish & Universal Investment Trust (a company owned by the Fraser family) bought the Tomintoul and **Old Fettercairn** distilleries, followed not much later by blenders **Whyte & Mackay**. Both of the distilleries were transferred to the new owners, who released the first single malt bottling of Tomintoul one year later. In 1974 the number of stills was expanded from two to four, all heated by steam. The Scottish & Universal Investment Trust was acquired in 1978 by the fairly shady investment company Lonrho. They sold on W&M in 1989.



In 1990 the generically monickered 'American Brands' conglomerate obtained Whyte & Mackay. I'm not entirely sure if the new owners released the remarkable **'perlume bottle'** of Tomintoul 12yo (shown above), or if that unconventional design sprung from the alcohol soaked brains of one of the previous owners. Whoever came up with this 'jugendstilish' design, it stayed in production until well into the 1990's - until the early noughties I've bought several 700d and 1000d bottles in stores in Holland, Germany and Italy.

Whyte & Mackay changed their name to the far less traditional **'JBB (Greater Europe)'** in 1995. JBB was bought by Kyndal International Ltd. a few years later in 2001, who decided to change their name to... Whyte & Mackay Ltd. shortly afterwards. It's enough to make your head spin, isn't it? And then, in 2007, Whyte & Mackay was bought by the tycoon Vijay Malviya from India. When I write this update (Spring 2009), it seems that Malviya may have bitten off a little more than he could chew...

However, by that time the Tomintoul distillery was already passed on to a new ownership; in 2000 **Angus Dundee Ltd.** obtained the distillery. Their first new release was a ten years old expression in a new packaging in 2002. A 16yo followed in 2003, a 27yo in 2004 and the young peaty 'Old Ballantruan' in 2005. This oddity in the Tomintoul portfolio was distilled in 1991 and bottled at 50%. The same year at least two independent bottlers released their own peated Ballantruan bottlings; Mackillop's Choice and Jack Wiebers Cross Hill. Around the year 2008 three new versions were released; a 12 years old Oloroso Finish, a 'Peaty Tang' (a vatting of peated and unpeated Tomintoul) and a 1976 vintage.

As far as the technical equipment is concerned, Tomintoul uses two wash stills and two spirit stills - all of them heated via **steam**. There are eight stainless steel washbacks, four large ones and four smaller ones. As for the large amounts of water that are required for the production process of malt whisky, the 'process water' comes from the Ballantruan source while the cooling water is obtained from two small lakes in the Cromdale Hills. In 2008 Tomintoul operated seven days a week.

- Aberfeldy
- Aberlour
- Abhainn Dearg
- Ailsa Bay
- Allt A' Bhainne
- Ardbeg
- Ardmore
- Arran
- Auchentoshan
- Auchroisk
- Aultmore
- Balblair
- Balmenach
- Balvenie
- Banff
- Ben Nevis
- Benriach
- Benrinnes
- Bennomach
- Ben-Morisc



LEAVE COMMENTS TO THE DISTILLERS WITH QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK OR check out the [donations page](#) for more details. Or just scroll down to enjoy the site for free...

GENERAL PAGES

- [Introduction](#) (mostly about Malt Madness)
- [SiteMap](#) (to help you find your way around)
- [Scotch Whisky Industry](#) (by ownership)
- [Whisky Bottlers](#) (the main bottlers of Scotch)
- [Whisky Brands](#) (most Scotch whisky brands)

BEGINNER'S GUIDE

- [Ch. 1: Basics](#) (the single malt whisky basics)
- [Ch. 2: Vocabulary](#) (words & abbreviations)
- [Ch. 3: Geography](#) (about Scotch whisky regions)
- [Ch. 4: Distillation](#) (turning 'beer' into whisky)
- [Ch. 5: Maturation](#) (oak, time and stuff...)
- [Ch. 6: Bottling](#) (about bottles & bottling them)
- [Ch. 7: Shopping](#) (spending your money wisely)
- [Ch. 8: Tasting](#) (tasting whisky the right way)
- [Ch. 9: Whisky Tastings](#) (how to organise them)
- [Ch. 10: Conclusion](#) (including a Reading List)
- [Whisky Label Inspector](#) (how to read the label)

DISTILLERY DATA

- [Distillery Overview](#) | [New Distillery Projects](#)
- [Database](#) | [Scotland](#) | [Scotch Whisky Regions](#)
- [Aberfeldy](#) | [Aberlour](#) | [Abhainn Dearg](#)
- [Ailsa Bay](#) | [Allt-A-Bhainne](#) | [Amanadale](#) | [Arbikie](#)
- [Ardbeg](#) | [Ardmore](#) | [Ardnamurchan](#) | [Arran](#)
- [Auchentoshan](#) | [Auchroisk](#) | [Aultmore](#) | [Balblair](#)
- [Ballindaloch](#) | [Balmenach](#) | [Balvenie](#) | [Banff](#)
- [Ben Nevis](#) | [Benriach](#) | [Benrinnes](#) | [Bennomach](#)
- [Ben Wyvis](#) | [Bladnoch](#) | [Blair Athol](#) | [Bonnamore](#)
- [Brackla](#) | [Braeval](#) | [Brons](#) | [Brùich-a-Bhàidich](#)
- [Bunnahabhain](#) | [Caledonian](#) | [Cambus](#)
- [Cameronbridge](#) | [Caol Ila](#) | [Caperdonich](#)
- [Cardhu](#) | [Carsaigside](#) | [Cherryish](#) | [Colobum](#)
- [Convamore](#) | [Cragganmore](#) | [Craignach](#)
- [Dalruidh](#) | [Dallas](#) | [Dallas Dhu](#) | [Dalmore](#)
- [Dalmenach](#) | [Dalwhinnie](#) | [Deanston](#)
- [Dufftown](#) | [Dumbarton](#) | [Edradour](#) | [Falkirk](#)
- [Fettercairn](#) | [Glenavon](#) | [Glenagee](#) | [Glen Albyn](#)
- [Glenallachie](#) | [Glenburgie](#) | [Glenadam](#)
- [Glenelg](#) | [Glenelgmore](#) | [Glenfiddich](#)
- [Glen Eoghain](#) | [Glenfiddich](#) | [Glenfiddich](#)
- [Glen Flapier](#) | [Glen Gairloch](#) | [Glenlisa](#)
- [Glenlivet](#) | [Glenlivet](#) | [Glenlivet](#) | [Glen Keith](#)
- [Glenkinchie](#) | [Glenlivet](#) | [Glenlivet](#) | [Glenlivet](#)
- [Glen Mhor](#) | [Glenmorangie](#) | [Glen Moray](#)
- [Glen Ord](#) | [Glenrothes](#) | [Glen Scotia](#)
- [Glen Spey](#) | [Glenlisset](#) | [Glenlisset](#)
- [Glenbuie](#) | [Glenbuie](#) | [Glenbuie](#)
- [Glenbuie](#) | [Glenbuie](#) | [Glenbuie](#)
- [Harris](#) | [Highland Park](#) | [Hillside](#) | [Imperial](#)
- [Inchbonnie](#) | [Invercauld](#) | [Invercauld](#) | [Jura](#)
- [Kilchoman](#) | [Kilchoman](#) | [Kilchoman](#) | [Kilchoman](#)
- [Kinross](#) | [Kinross](#) | [Kinross](#) | [Kinross](#)
- [Laphroaig](#) | [Laphroaig](#) | [Laphroaig](#) | [Laphroaig](#)
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- [Lomond](#) | [Lomond](#) | [Lomond](#) | [Lomond](#)
- [Macallan](#) | [Macallan](#) | [Macallan](#) | [Macallan](#)
- [Mannochmore](#) | [Mannochmore](#) | [Mannochmore](#) | [Mannochmore](#)
- [Mortlach](#) | [Mortlach](#) | [Mortlach](#) | [Mortlach](#)

Together with geography and maturation, distillation is one of the three main **'ingredients'** of Scotch malt whisky. Whisky production begins with the mashing of barley and ends with fresh 'new make spirit'. Chapter 4 deals with all stages of the **distillation** process. That includes the growing of **barley** grains, mashing, permination, mashing, fermentation, various **pot still types** and, last but not least, the actual **distillation** of the malt whisky in copper pot stills. >>>>

Chapter 5: Maturation - The spirit needs time to evolve into whisky >>>

After at least 3 years of maturation in **oak casks** the freshly distilled spirit has transformed into whisky. The pedigree and history of the **wood** and **casks** is perhaps the most significant factor in shaping the final product. The differences between whiskies aged in **ex-bourbon** barrels and those that were matured in **ex-sherry** casks are very significant. A particular shape, size and type of cask all contribute to the alchemy to maturation. >>>>

Chapter 6: Bottling - All about bottles and bottling >>>

Thanks to the invention of the **bottle** we don't have to drink our whisky straight from the cask anymore. The sixth chapter deals with the **bottling** of the (Scotch) malt whisky once it has been matured for at least 3 years. It also covers related topics like the difference between **official bottlings**, **independent bottlings** and 'bastards' single casks, cask strength **bottlings**, batch variation, chill filtration, artificial whisky colouring with caramel, etc. Chapter six explains why **whisky bottles** were such a great invention - and why **labels** improved upon it. >>>>

Chapter 7: Shopping - The ways of getting your whisky >>>

So, now it's time to spend some actual money on (malt) whisky. There are many different whiskies available via different **whisky shopping channels** but a bottle of **decent whisky** can still be obtained for as little as **25 Euro** if you know what to look for. But it's not always easy to seek out the bargains - especially for relative 'beginners' in the confusing whisky world. Chapter 7 help you make sensible choices when it comes to buying your bottles. >>>>

Chapter 8: Tasting - About tasting whisky like you mean it >>>

Everybody enjoys a whisky in his or her own way, and that's just fine with me. However, if you want to get the most from a single malt, it helps to consider topics like the type of **glassware** that is suitable for serious whisky analysis, the **temperature** at which malt whisky is best served, if **distillation** at whisky (whisky) is not just a myth and how we can make the most of our senses whilst seriously **tasting** (and enjoying) a glass of malt whisky. >>>>

Chapter 9: Practice - Organise your own little tasting party >>>

Practice makes perfect. The huge **variation** in character and style between whiskies from various distilleries, stills, ingredients and countries means that you'll have some serious 'drumming' ahead of you. As you go along, you will develop a **'frame of reference'** and soon you'll be able to organise a 'social' **whisky tasting** with a few friends. But wouldn't it be a shame if they all showed up with the same bottle? Yes it would - but chapter 9 can help. >>>>

Chapter 10: Conclusion - Some final observations and reflections >>>

The **last chapter** wraps up the first part of the Beginner's Guide. Apart from some reflections on whisky it contains a **Reading List** with some suggestions for whisky books. Because your whisky education is just beginning. >>>>

APPENDIX B

MELANIE

BACKGROUND

Preschool Teacher
Married with 2 children (8 and 6)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Female
Age 30-40
Dual Household Income: \$125,000
Suburban

IDENTIFIERS

Cheery personality
Clips coupons

GOALS

Take care of household
Be a positive role model for students and children

CHALLENGES

Juggling household, family and job responsibilities
Maintaining exercise routine

WHAT CAN WE DO

Provide high-quality meals
Fast Drive Thru Service

REAL QUOTES

"I don't have enough time to cook a healthy meal most weeknights."
"Every minute is precious."

COMMON OBJECTIONS

It's too expensive to eat out at night.
I can cook a healthy meal at home.

MARKETING MESSAGING

Chick-fil-A's Mom's Valet Service

ELEVATOR PITCH

With our Mom's Valet Service we can have a healthy family meal ready for you by the time you sit down.

Jameson Scott



Quote from Survey:

“Scotch snobs intimidate people, in the same way wine snobs, classical music snobs, fine dining snobs needlessly intimidate people. I think many people believe they aren’t sophisticated enough, or don’t know enough, to enjoy or appreciate scotch. Also: where do I start? Which one do I buy first to try?”

Background: Financial Advisor, Married with One Child (4 Years Old)

Demographics: Male, 28-32, Annual Income: \$62,000, Lives in Subdivision in Southern California

Identifiers: Strong Work Ethic, Attention to Detail, Enjoys Entertaining Guests

Goals: Perform in Job, Provide for Family, Lead an Active Social Life

Challenges: Work-Life Balance, Hard Time Relaxing

Reason for Looking at Scotch: Sounds sophisticated, recommended by friend

Apprehensions: Price, Intimidated by Snobbish Connoisseurs

What I Can Do: Make information accessible and unpretentious; pay attention to detail while also not overwhelming with detail

Current Most-Played Artists on Spotify: U2 and Coldplay

Mike Higgins



Background: Social Worker, Married with Two Children (23 and 19 years old)

Demographics: Male, 52-56, Annual Income: \$40,000, Lives in a Rural Neighborhood in Central Kentucky

Identifiers: Family-Oriented, Loves Learning, Humble, Open-Minded

Goals: Spend Quality Time with Family, Help Others, Cultivate Virtue

Challenges: Struggles with Emotion at Work, Can Be Overwhelmed by Technology

Quote from Survey:

“Flavor and new experiences are my main things, but I cant have those if I can’t afford the bottle in the first place. I simply can’t justify over \$80 or so on a bottle, and even that is a stretch. But it seems like something to enhance great conversation.”

Reason for Looking at Scotch: Opportunity for Learning, Medium for Quality Time (Quality time being time spent away from work and the outside world; focused on family, friends, and the moment)

Apprehensions: Sounds too Complicated and Too Pricy for his Lifestyle

What I Can Do: Implement UX design to maximize task guidance, make information accessible with little to no jargon, do not focus on high-priced scotch, emphasize personal and social benefits of scotch

Current Most-Played Artists on Spotify: James Taylor and Kris Kristofferson

Chris Beckett



Background: Brand Manager, Married with Two Children (4 and 2 years old)

Demographics: Male, 30-34, Annual Income: \$75,000, Small Town in Central Tennessee

Identifiers: Knowledgeable, Diligent, Enthusiastic, Opinionated

Goals: Advance in Career, Maintain Healthy Family Relationships, Learn as Much as Possible about Interests

Challenges: Maintaining Mental Health during Career Stressors, Dividing Time between Work and Life

Reason for Looking at Scotch: Been drinking scotch since he could, knows all about many brands, enjoys producing complex tasting notes, enjoys learning every little detail about every scotch he drinks

Apprehensions: Intimidated by Price of Limited Bottles

What I Can Do: N/A

Current Most-Played Artists on Spotify: Rush and Led Zeppelin

Quote from Survey:

“It’s all about the depth of experience for me. A relaxed hour or more smelling and sipping a good single malt is quality personal time. Like a rich wine, a good scotch is many flavors as it rolls over the tongue. Exploring those combinations makes it worthwhile.”

APPENDIX D



It is not an overwhelming clutter of stuff

You will not be faced with an overload of information about everything to do with scotch, and your eyes will not become tired from a congested webpage.

IMPLICATIONS

- Plenty of white space for readability
- A simple, non-scrolling home page
- Selective information about topics



Information is detailed yet uncomplicated

When reading about scotch, you will find that you are learning a lot of interesting things without feeling excluded by technical jargon or unclear language.

IMPLICATIONS

- Clearly-defined terms
- Inclusion of interesting facts and tidbits
- Correct, concise, and clear use of language



It is focused on the common and accessible

Scotch whisky is a hobby centered around intentionality and community; you will not find any exclusive information that you cannot experience for yourself on way or another.

IMPLICATIONS

- Focused on bottles that are readily available
- Information is not limited to any particular knowledge base
- Design is centered around tasks and hierarchical structures

APPENDIX E

75	Cardhu	12 Year Ol	40%	\$	Well balanced, smooth mouthfeel; sweet and fresh, then drying.
76		15 Year Ol	40%	\$\$	Slow to venture forth and quite viscous straight. Cooling, then peppery and slightly charred.
77		18 Year Ol	40%	\$\$\$	Smooth and sweet taste, unctuous, yet with light and lively acidity.
78		Gold Reser	40%	\$\$	Bigger flavours and drier than the nose suggests, with its initial sweetness cut by crisp orange zest followed by a subtle mineral dryness.
79	Clynelish	14 Year Ol	46%	\$\$	Pleasant creamy mouthfeel; maritime generally.
80	Cragganm	12 Year Ol	40%	\$\$	A strong malty taste with hints of sweet wood smoke and sandalwood.
81		Distiller's E	40%	\$\$	Firm, sweet, with smoky undertones and fruitiness. Malt, oak and smoke at the base. Intriguingly layered.
82	Craigellach	13 Years C	46%	\$	To the taste this 13 year old Craigellachie delivers malty, sweet complexity, with a finish that is slightly smokey.
83		17 Year Ol	46%	\$\$\$	To the taste this 17 year old Craigellachie delivers a smooth, sweet palate, with a smoky, lingering finish.
84		23 Year Ol	46%	\$\$\$\$	To the taste this 23 year old Craigellachie delivers fruity sweetness with an edge of sulphur.
85	Dalmore	12 Year Ol	40%	\$	Seville oranges, dried fruits and hints of vanilla pod
86		15 Year Ol	40%	\$\$\$	Mandarin, vanilla, ginger and crushed apples
87		18 Year Ol	43%	\$\$\$	Dark chocolate, candied citrus fruits, rich coffee, nutmeg and soft liquorice
88		Cigar Malt	44%	\$\$\$	Citrus zest, vanilla pod, crème caramel and crushed almonds
89		King Alexa	40%	\$\$\$\$	Tropical fruits, banana toffee and vanilla ice cream
90	Dalwhinnie	15 Year Ol	43%	\$\$	Smooth, soft and lasting flavours of heather-honey sweetness and vanilla followed by deeper citrus-fruit flavours and hints of malted bread.
91		Distiller's E	43%	\$\$	A big, spicy buzz followed by an impressive build-up of very clear, well defined Scotch. After a quick burst of sweetness, a rich, grape effect moves in towards the middle.
92		Winters Gc	43%	\$\$	A balancing ripe autumn-fruit tartness. Growing spicy, with gingerbread; then denser with rich malt loaf, molasses and mint; and later soft, distant smoke.
93	Deanston	12 Year Ol	46.30%	\$\$	Smooth creamy sweetness with sumptuous hints of fruit, malty honeyed spiciness and soft vanilla.
94		Virgin Oak	46.30%	\$	A delightful sweetness, evoking memories of candied fruits and vanilla toffee, balanced with heather honey.
95	Edradour	10 Year Ol	43%	\$\$	Spicy Christmas cake, sweet golden syrup with a touch of honeyed almonds. A distinctive, old fashioned, rich mouth feel coming from the small copper farm stills
96	Glencadan	10 Year Ol	46%	\$	Rounded elegance. Clean, crisp citrus tones. A pleasing harmony between a natural sweetness and the soft spicy oak
97		15 Year Ol	46%	\$\$	Juicy cut-grass freshness with a mouth-watering malty signature. Restrained sweetness caressed by soft oak
98	GlenDrona	12 Year Ol	43%	\$\$	Rich, creamy, silky-smooth. Warm, rich oak and sherry sweetness, full mouth feel, raisins and soft fruits. Spicy with medium length and a dry finish.
99		15 Year Ol	46%	\$\$\$	Honey-glazed apricot and ripe fig with a crescendo of black cherry, angelica and muscovado. Long and enveloping finish with dark manuka honey, herbal bitters and dark chocolate.
100		18 Year Ol	46%	\$\$\$	Rich dark and seductive. Remarkable flavours of stewed fruits and all-spice marry together with classic aged Oloroso sherry and toasted walnut bread combined with chocolate orange.