

Samori Gambrah, global brand director for Captain Morgan

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

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Meet Samori Gambrah, the global brand director for Captain Morgan, he speaks to us about plans to launch their new pan-African campaign that features actors from South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya.



Samori Gambrah is the global brand director for Captain Morgan. Source: Supplied.

■ ***Can you tell us about your journey in the beverage industry, starting with SABMiller and then moving to ABInBev and Diageo?***

I started my career with SABMiller, then to ABInBev in various senior commercial and marketing roles across Africa including regional brand director, Carling Black Label winning a Cannes Lions Grand Prix for the *#NoExcuse* campaign.

I joined Diageo in 2018 as marketing & innovation director in Ghana, supporting the business to take a significant market leadership position. In 2021 I was seconded to Johnnie Walker, as global marketing director leading the communications and culture team to deliver the next chapter of the globally celebrated *Keep Walking* campaign.

After that, I moved to London and into my current role as the global brand director for Captain Morgan, one of Diageo's global giants which is produced in 16 markets and enjoyed in more than 100 countries around the world.

■ ***With your experience working across different African countries, how do you tailor marketing strategies to suit specific cultural nuances and preferences?***

We happen to be in the process of planning a pan-African campaign that is set to launch in several markets including South Africa very shortly and it's essential that the creative connects with consumers in every market. To achieve this we've been guided by cultural insight and involved people who understand this deeply from the beginning.

We worked with an African creative at our advertising agency, a production company based in South Africa, and hired actors from Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. The music was chosen because of its international appeal across Africa and beyond, and we have created two versions of the campaign voiced by local talent that resonates in different markets. I can't wait to get the campaign launched!

■ ***The alcoholic beverage industry also faces challenges related to responsible drinking and societal concerns. How does Captain Morgan approach these issues, and what marketing initiatives do you have in place to promote responsible consumption?***

Promoting positive drinking is a core brand value for Captain Morgan. In March, we launched our biggest ever responsible drinking campaign called *Enjoy Slow* which called on people around the world to moderate their drinking.

The campaign featured acclaimed musician, Bree Runway, and her smooth, slow jam remix of Corona's iconic, *The Rhythm Of The Night*, making the point that good things can be slowed down and just as fun. Research shows us that people feel more confident to drink moderately after watching the ad, and the campaign has reached millions of people in South Africa.

■ ***In your role as global marketing director for Johnnie Walker, leading the Keep Walking campaign reboot, what were the main challenges you faced, and how did you overcome them?***

Johnnie Walker has successfully stood for *Keep Walking* over many years, inspiring personal progress. This message was just as relevant now as historically – but our challenge in a post Covid-19 world was how we could evolve this ethos to be more reflective of fast-changing world. We successfully evolved *Keep Walking* to inspire collective progress and engage deeper into culture driving greater relevance for Johnnie Walker across our many markets.

■ ***The beverage industry is highly competitive, with various brands vying for the attention of consumers. How do you differentiate Captain Morgan from its competitors and create a unique brand identity?***

Captain Morgan is a brand that has never stood still, it is constantly evolving with new consumer insight led innovations, like our partnership with Vita-Coco in North America, and culture led campaigns such as our recent *Enjoy Slow* campaign with Bree Runway that ran in South Africa. What has remained our constant north star is the delicious spice of our liquid; with notes of vanilla and brown sugar and the attitude of fun we bring to our marketing.

■ ***How do you ensure that Captain Morgan attracts and retains top talent to drive its marketing and brand initiatives forward?***

Diageo is an incredible company to work for and grow your career within. The business has a culture that's warm, innovative and puts a huge focus on ensuring everyone has freedom to succeed. We are a leader in inclusion and diversity and our purpose is 'celebrate life every day, everywhere.'

I'm lucky to work with an immensely talented and passionate Captain Morgan team – and as a leader focus on ensuring we're building a high performing, supportive team where everyone has the scope to bring their best work and achieve their goals.

■ ***In your view, what role does storytelling play in building a brand's identity and connecting with consumers? How do you incorporate storytelling into Captain Morgan's marketing strategy?***

Storytelling is an integral part of building a brand's identity and over time creates a unique tone of voice, it also engages consumers, bringing them into the brand world in an immersive way.

We have recently launched a global campaign for Captain Morgan called *Spice On* and like any story worth its salt, we wanted it to be relatable and come from an authentic starting point, so we went back to the brand's roots – spice. Spice is what makes Captain Morgan so delicious, and spice is what makes each of us unique, that 'you do you' attitude of being authentically and unashamedly yourself. This is has become the foundation of storytelling for the brand and provides us with the creative foundations to tell the layered stories that bring Captain Morgan to life.

■ ***As a marketing leader, how do you ensure that your team remains motivated and aligned with the brand's vision and goals?***

Don't overthink strategy, keep it simple. Then, over invest time and resource in establishing an empowering team culture that enables everyone to unlock bold creativity that will drive brand love with our consumers and deliver on the performance ambition. That's the job, and make sure you're having fun doing it too.

■ ***Looking ahead, what are your long-term visions and aspirations for the Captain Morgan brand?***

My job is to ensure that Captain Morgan thrives as a brand for generations to come – continuing to be a recruiter for

Diageo's portfolio and growing in markets around the world. We have committed to putting responsible drinking at the heart of Captain Morgan, so I would like the brand to be known for contributing to making moderation a cultural norm.

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

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