

## BANJUL BREWERIES LTD, Gambie

BANJUL BREWERIES LTD.  
INTERVIEW WITH  
MR. ROBERT L. COLLINS, General Manager  
www.winne.com November 18th, 2000

Banjul Breweries started production in 1977. You are specialized in the production of beer, Guinness and soft drinks. But for our reader, can you describe the various stages of your development and describe the variety of drinks that you produce ?

Banjul Breweries when it came to the Gambia had a tough road home because it was a brewery in a predominately Muslim country and it was again predominately for the tourist industry and not so much for local consumption. The brewery had some little difficulties at the start because of this and most breweries in small countries have to struggle for the first couple of years, trying to set up to work properly and Banjul Brewery got a little bit of kicking, in the 80's when part of the brewery was burnt down during a coup, economical decline and then again as it started to raise its head above waters there was the coup in 94. Since 94 the previous General Manager to myself put the company on a strong financial base. He was predominately an accountant and put some steel into the finances of the company. I am a commercial person, I have a degree in Business Administration, majoring in marketing. I came here some 18 months ago and the strategy of our company has always been similar: they put a finance guy to strengthen the finance, then a marketing guy to keep the sales up and then another finance guy into a period of stabilization and so on. This is what we have done and we achieved a record profit last year and we will have another record profit this year. The brewery is going from strength to strength and it has been a good investment to shareholders, the employees and the country. As far as volumes are concerned, this year we are looking close to 50,000 hectoliters. In the last 12 months we had a 30 % increase in sales volume.

Your business depends essentially on the tourism sector which has been declining for the past few years. Has this phenomenon had an impact on your activity level ?

For the last couple of years we have had an extra technical manager, he has improved the quality of our product dramatically. We won a Guinness award in Africa, we went from number 24 to number 3 and we are now number 7 in the world. In the quality of GFE (Guinness Foreign Extract) we are trying to get to number 1, which is very difficult. Malaysia, I think is number 1 but I think we are number 2, in Africa I am waiting for last year's figures, we will be at worst number 3, I will have to say that for a country with a population not as educated as in the more developed country that it is an achievement.

Can you describe briefly what are the other brands that you manufacture ?

Guinness and Vimto are corporate brand that we manufacture under license. Vimto is a very strong English brand, it is number 2 here. We manufacture Soda and Tonic water, Mango, Cocktail de Fruit, Bitter Lemon, Malta (which is a very strong seller), we rebottle wine from Spain and we hopefully, next year, we will embark on Vita malt and this is a product we hope to export into neighboring countries.

The competition is fierce on the national market, especially with the presence of international brands. So, in your opinion, what really differentiates Banjul Breweries from other beverage companies and which areas should require some improvement ?

We increased our market dramatically. When we have a tourist industry that is declining and we have a 16 % increase in our beer volumes, it means that we really got into them. However, there are some problems with imported beer not paying the correct duties which the department of customs, through the Department of Finance, is currently is trying to rectify for us. If that comes to pass, for which I have confidence, it will further increase our market. We have got a good quality product and like any imported product compared to a local product, you must understand that it is not something that travels remarkably well. What you have is a product that has to have stabilizers and extenders in it, it has also been shipped, loaded in containers and different things like that. There is also a problem of date, the product has to a month old or two when it arrives here, whilst ours is a day or two old when it leaves the brewery, so as long as you have a good quality product automatically your local product wherever it is in the world should be better than the imported product. Unfortunately, all the time I have been in the industry, there has always been an idea that imported products are better than local products, which is just not true. The local product is a good product in other words Heineken and Becks are fantastic in Holland and Germany, but not as good in any other country. We have done a lot to our marketing and distribution, we are very aggressive in our marketing and distribution and we continue to do so, this is why we have kicked up dramatically in our sales.

It seems however that tourists tend to make the most of their "Gambian experience" by drinking local beer and that local people tend to drink foreign beer as a social distinction, isn't it ?

You are 100 percent correct, most of the foreign beers that come in this country are drunk not by tourists but by rich Gambian with the idea that they earn more money than the other people, therefore they can afford the expensive product and this is the same all over Africa. But because our product is very good we are winning more and more of the local market as well. The fear I have is that because the tourism is being estimated between 25 % and 30 % reduction, this is going to take the cream off my beer sales but soft drink sales will not be affected at all. My soft drink sales are more local. This is the first country I haven't been a Coca-Cola bottler and being a Coca-Cola bottler I know that when someone goes to Europe they would be interested in a Coke, Sprite or Fanta more than Vimto, Malta or Cocktail de Fruit which they haven't heard of, so our soft drink market is local.

Many companies feel they have a corporate social responsibility towards the Gambian community. To what extent do you feel involved in the improvement of Gambians'life ?

We are a major sponsor of the Roots Home Coming Festival and we are working with Coca-Cola in helping the Ground Operators with free drinks on their upcoming fate. We are in constant contact with Mr. Touray (Minister of Tourism), we are involved

in helping different committees and we have donated funds to President Jammeh to fix the roads. We are very much involved in that kind of thing.

What do you think about the revitalization program launched by the Ministry of Tourism to boost the tourism industry ?

SOS Touray is certainly making the right noise. The noise he is making and the action he has appeared to put into place is most certainly something in the right direction which has been lacking and I commend him for that, I believe it is late but better late than never. Gambia has as its greatest asset the people, the Gambian people are some of the nicest people you can meet. I come from the Carribeans and they are supposed to be the tourists' heaven but there is no comparison between the service made by the people within the tourist trade and The Gambia. This is the greatest asset they have; they have a little bit of groundnut and very small industries. We are a big business here but outside, in comparison with companies like Bud Wiser, we are small.

High level of Human resources capacities seems to be one of your main focuses. What is policy to effectively update the qualification of your staff ?

I have 120 Gambians, 2 expatriates, my technical manager and myself. I inherited some 27 illiterate people in an industry, which is a hi-Tec industry, last year I organized a six month literacy course for my illiterate employees which was sponsored by the brewery, we taught them how to read and write. Now we don't have any illiterate employee, all of them can read and write, and I am extremely proud that there are 27 Gambian that can read and write thanks to me. We now have an entrance requirement that you must be a high school level even if you want a job as a sweeper. One of the weakest areas I had problems with when I came here was human resources, I have employed a Gambian lady who has a master degree in Human Resources and she is our human resources manager. We have now established all job specifications and requirements, company planning, company profile, etc.... We have raised the quality of our workers and we are the only company in the Gambia that has a collective agreement signed by the workers committee and ourselves to state salary conditions plus penalties. We did this with the full knowledge and cooperation of the ministry of Labor who ratify the agreement with our workers to make sure we are in line with the law of the Gambia. We now have our budget for training which we didn't have before mainly because of financial constraints. We believe our most expensive asset is our people, machines come and go but people are what we want. We give our employees 4 % of the profit of this company as performance bonus, we also offer our employees to buy part of this business and we are selling 750,000 shares to about 35 employees. There are more that want shares desperately but due to the socio-economic situation of the country and it is more important for them to have a house than a share in a company. Some 35 employees, senior management down to junior staff have taken now between 20 and 1200 shares within the company.

What is your capital structure ?

We have about 3 % of the company that is owned by the Department of Finance and Assets Management and Recovery Cooperation (AMRC) of the government, 1 % by employees and the rest by overseas investors. Danish Brewery Group, Denmark owns 35 % and Brauhaase International Management owns the rest, about 61 %. We tried very hard to get Gambians to buy shares up to 20 % in the company because it is important to give back to the Gambia, unfortunately they turned it down, they are more interested in Trust bank and different places. We got some Gambians but we would like to have more and we are more interested in selling to local Gambians.

In the last 12 months we have invested 16 million Dalasis in capital expenditure, I don't know if any other company spends that much and we have over the next five year a policy of an excessive 12 million Dalasis per year that we will be used for capital expenditure. Basically we have a 10 % dividend policy which may change and go up. This is our home, we are not here for a short time, we can't pick this brewery and take it for someone else.

Banjul Brewery is one example of private foreign investment in the Gambia. What would you suggest to the Government in order to boost the FDI in the country ?

I would like to see the government having a manufacturing policy, I haven't seen a strategic plan for investment within the Gambia. The Gambia doesn't need a high-Tech company that is going to employ 3 or 4 people, you want a mass industry that will employ 3 or 4 thousand people and paying them well. Due to the extended families if you employ a thousand people in actual fact you are helping five to ten thousand people. I knew President Jammeh when I just came to this country, I was told about his vision 2020 and he is saying he wants to make Gambia the Singapore of West Africa. I think that is a most commendable vision, I hope for his sake and the country's sake it becomes true. The opportunity is there because the people are not aggressive people and they are isolated in a small geographical area so there is a possibility. But they have to get their roads, Power Supply, Water supply and their school system sorted out, it is coming but not yet there.

You are today General Manager of Banjul Breweries, so can you enlighten us on your professional background ?

I have worked as General Manager in Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Solomon Island, St. Vincent and now here, I also had to travel to many countries. Basically I am an administrator specialized in marketing, I like to consider myself as a sales man.

My transfer from St. Vincent brought me to the Gambia. I was born in India, I had my secondary and tertiary education in Australia and left Australia in 1988 to become a professional gypsy.

How long to you intend to stay in The Gambia ?

I don't know, but normally my assignments are three years, my wife and I quite like it here, the people are more friendly here.

What would be you greatest challenges in the near future ?

To make us the only beverage suppliers in The Gambia in other words no important beer, no Coca-Cola. The first month I was here the soft drink sales went up 25 % we took 5 % market shares off Coca-Cola only, which is quite an accomplishment but they went up 20 % because of that the market expanded. We have to continue our distribution; distribution here is low because of the road and the isolation of villages. The growth is not in the greater Banjul areas.

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# 2008 : rachat aux groupe allemand Brauhaase et au Danois Royal Unibrew par les Brasseries et glaciers internationales (Castel)

[www.entreprises-coloniales.fr/inde-indochine/Brasseries\\_glacieres\\_internationales.pdf](http://www.entreprises-coloniales.fr/inde-indochine/Brasseries_glacieres_internationales.pdf)

Banjul Breweries Launches Four New Brands

By: Baboucarr Senghore  
(thepoint.gm, 5 mars 2009)

In a bid to build up the local domestic market, Banjul Breweries Gambia Limited, the home of Vimto, Cocktail and Malta among other beverages, on Tuesday 3rd March 2009 launched four more brands to join its current ones in The Gambia's fridges.

The Youki Brand, a product of Castel Groupe in Paris, who owns about 50 breweries around Africa, is among other things aimed at meeting the expectation of the seemingly increasing consumers of Banjul Breweries products.

Apart from Vimto, Cocktail, Malta and others, Banjul Breweries now have in their flavours, the Youki Grapefruit, which is exactly like the old bitter lemon, we have the Youki Pineapple, which is a new flavour, the Youki Lemonade, which is a bit sweeter and Youki Soda water.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, held at the Banjul Breweries premises, Mr. Thibault De Laplagnolle, country sales and marketing manager, said with these new products, Banjul Breweries is hoping to show its will to help the local market and then sustain the local economy.

"We could have imported the products from other breweries in other countries, but we decided to produce it locally in order to sustain the local economy," he said. He added that the company has always make its products affordable to everybody and these four new products are no exception.

According to Mr Thibault, the company wants to use the knowledge of brewery work to implement it in the local market. "We decided together with the management and the workers to start those new flavours in order to meet the expectation of the consumers.

This is prompted by the fact that there was lot of feedback regarding the bitter lemon that we used to produce, which was a real success," he noted.

For her part, Mrs Fatou Sinyan-Mbergan, financial controller at Banjul Breweries, appealed to everybody to patronise Julbrew in their bid to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of the country.

Also speaking earlier, Borry Darboe, customer service supervisor, said, "together with your usual co-operation and understanding Banjul Breweries will continue to provide its ever increasing customer base excellent products, the taste they can's resist".

This, he added, has been the bedrock for Banjul Breweries as they always make sure that they produce products that each and every Gambian would like.

"Banjul Breweries has been on the ground for a long period now since 1977 and up to date, we have been providing excellent services.

"It is also our pledge to continue providing you excellent services, which every one can always rely on.

The price for a crate of the brand is D190 in the market and D10 per bottle," Mr Darboe stated.

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Banjul Breweries Ltd. celebrates prestigious award  
par Yusuf Ceesay  
(thepoint.gm, 23 mars 2010)

Banjul Breweries Limited last Friday celebrated in grand style the recent award conferred on them as the Manufacturer of The Year 2009, by the Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI).

This is said to be the first time in the history of the company in 30 years to win this prestigious award.

Speaking at the occasion, Fatou Sinyan-Mbergan, the Financial Controller of Banjul Breweries, commended the government under the able leadership of President Yahya Jammeh for creating the enabling environment for manufacturing companies to flourish and grow. She said that this goes to show how far they have journeyed as a company, employees and as a team.

She read a congratulatory message by Mr. Martignac, the Chairman of the Board Directors as saying "this achievement was a clear recognition of your endless efforts to further develop Banjul Breweries beverages all over the country."

Mrs. Sinyan Mergan further expressed her team's readiness to keep up the momentum and get ready for the race to win the 2010 award. She assured that they would continue to produce high quality products at economic rates and to be a leading corporate citizen to government, public, employees and shareholders.

She revealed that in 2009, they made the extension of the beverage brands from three soft drinks: Malta, Cocktail and Vimto to nine by the introduction of the Youki brand, namely Youki Grapefruit, Pineapple, Orange, Cola, Lemonade and Soda.

According to her, the company in the same year had witnessed a transformation of the brewery from 30 years bottling line with a capacity of only 8, 500 bottles per hour to a state of the art new bottling line with a capacity of between 30, 000 to 40, 000 bottles per hour.

She stated that their shareholders had made a total capital investment of D190m in order to expand, as well as to improve their efficiency.

As part of their corporate social responsibilities, she said, the company has in recent past donated handsomely in sectors like education, health, agriculture and sports. This tradition, she added, will also continue in the year 2010.

She also commended their esteemed customers, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, shareholders, and consumers for their continuous partnership and patronage.

Also, speaking at the ceremony, the out going Country Sales and Marketing Manager, Mr. Thibault de Laplagnolle said they hoped to achieve more as a company in the near future. He thanked the Board of Directors and management, retailers, wholesalers for their relentless support.

According to him, the award came as a result of their hardwork and commitment to duties.

For his part, the incoming Country Sales and Marketing Manager Mr. Franck Bœuf said by putting hands together, they would indeed go far to develop as a stronger family of the Youki product of the generation.

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Glamorous Model visits Banjul Breweries  
by Yusuf Ceesay  
thepoint.gm, 27 octobre 2010

Glamorous Model of The Gambia (GMG) led by the proprietor of Vision Promotions, Williams Brown, on 21 October 2010 paid a courtesy call on the beverage manufacturing company, Banjul Breweries.

Speaking on the occasion, Williams Brown said: "Vision Promotions is behind Glamorous model of The Gambia, which includes natives from Basse, Brikama, Farrafenni and the greater Banjul area.

He added that they recently conducted a show and audition in Basse in which 30 models including boys and girls were qualified for the final set to take part in a model show on 5 November 2010 at the Friendship Hotel at the Independence Stadium in Bakau.

Franck Bœuf, country sales and marketing manager of Banjul Breweries Limited, said: "Banjul Breweries is in support of GMG. Young people need to become together to establish something for themselves."

Mr Bœuf said Banjul Breweries is always ready to give back to the society and the country as part of the company's corporate social responsibility. He thanked Williams Brown for making the trip to Basse a success.

"We should not focus on only the greater Banjul area; rather we should reach other parts of the country," Mr Boeuf said, adding that young people can do a lot if given the support.

"The Gambia is an advanced country in Africa and with a future; therefore there is a need to invest," Boeuf noted.

He advised the models to put up excellent performance at the upcoming event in November.

Rahim Sesay, a model, said their visit to Banjul breweries was promoted by the Youki brand.

He stated that two weeks ago they went to Basse to meet with other models. "We see it necessary to meet those with passion and potentials to be modelists," he stated.

For her part, Fatou Sinyan Mbregan, financial controller of Banjul Breweries, challenged Glamourous to make their choice wisely, and with honesty and faithfulness. She further advised them to work hard, adding that young people have a lot of challenges ahead of them.

"As young people, you cannot work in isolation but to work as partners," she noted.

The models earlier visited Joao Ferreira, the technical department manager, and Idrissa Susso, lab technician at Banjul Breweries as part of their call on the company.

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Banjul Breweries signs one year contract with Jaliba Kuyateh  
par Abdoulie Nyockeh  
thepoint.gm, 7 mars 2011

In a bid to sensitize the populace more about its Youki products and uplift the image of the company and its products, Banjul Breweries recently signed a one year contract with famous Gambian musician Jaliba Kuyateh and the Kumareh Band.

With this new deal, Banjul Breweries Limited, the home of Vimto, Cocktail and Malta among other beverages, will sponsor a new album by Jaliba Kuyateh entitled Youki to the tune of D250,000. The album will also feature a song about Banjul Breweries and its products.

The Youki Brand, a product of Castel Groupe in Paris, who owns about 50 breweries around Africa, is among other things aimed at meeting the expectation of the seemingly increasing consumers of Banjul Breweries products.

Apart from Vimto, Cocktail, Malta and others, Banjul Breweries now have in their flavours, the Youki Grapefruit, which is exactly like the old bitter lemon. The company also has the Youki Pineapple, which is a new flavour, the Youki Lemonade, which is a bit sweeter and Youki Soda water.

Speaking to our reporter at his office, Borri Darboe, Sales Supervisor and Administrator Customer Service Department Banjul Breweries Limited, said the album Youki to be produced by Jaliba Kuyateh is dedicated to the Youki family.

According to him, this was done due to the fact that the company has seen the love that Jaliba have for this country and that they have seen in him, the potential that he can help a great deal in promoting our products.

Describing Jaliba as a patriotic Gambian, Borri noted that Banjul Breweries Limited will always go in for the best so as to satisfy Gambians.

He said Banjul Breweries products are exceptional to other manufacturing industries in the country as their products are of international standard and the company always endeavors to give its customers what they want.

Darboe stressed that partnering with Jaliba Kuyateh is a step in the right direction in the sense that Jaliba is somebody who entertains, educate and informs the public. "So partnering with him is something Banjul Breweries feels it necessary and it will go a long way in enhancing the image of the company and its product as well as create awareness in the society about the Youki products," Darboe added.

He stated that Banjul Breweries always wants to associate itself with excellence and Jaliba is an excellent musician not only in the Gambia but the entire Sub-region. He described Jaliba's instruments as one of the best.

Darboe further revealed that Banjul Breweries made an agreement with Ocean Grafix, an advertisement agency to bring to the doorstep of the Gambian people, the Champions League football matches, which are featured on GRTS every Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

He added that Banjul Breweries deems it necessary to contribute their quota in certain important events in society. He noted that the partnership with Jaliba will help sensitize the populace about the Youki products as this will further help uplift the image of the company and its products.

He added that with Jaliba, people will be able to know about Youki and what it is all about, noting that Youki is not only a refreshment but a medicinal product with lots of benefits.

He underscored the company's commitment to youth development, stating that the company felt the need to assist the youth of this country.

"We are very happy to support Jaliba Kuyateh. In doing so, it means we are contributing to national development. Mr Darboe urged the Gambian people to invest in their own recognized Gambian musicians rather than those coming from outside. This, he went on, is because any money spent on the Gambian musicians will be ploughed back to the Gambian people."

He further stated that Banjul Breweries is not only making profits but ploughing back these profits back to the people, adding that the company is delighted with its customers.



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Gambia. Banjul Breweries launches new Castel beer  
journal.beer 10/05/2011

Banjul Breweries Limited, the elite beverage company in The Gambia on Thursday evening introduced a new product called the 'Castel Beer' in the beverage market industry at the Scene Bar and Restaurant situated along Lemon Creek, Bijilo.

The product that has 5.2 percent of alcohol is the latest of its kind that Banjul Breweries has introduced to its esteemed customers. The event followed the introduction of other new brands on a very regular basis. The company always strives to bring quality and satisfaction to their customers.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Fatou Sinyan Mbergan, the financial controller and administrator at Banjul Breweries reiterated the company's commitment and dedication to the customer's satisfaction. She said that with the successes registered by the company in the Julbrew Lager Beer, Banjul Breweries deemed it necessary to produce Castel Beer in The Gambia and introduce it to their beer clientele, especially to the tourists. "The newly introduced beer 'Castel Beer', she added, "carries the name of Pierre Castel, the proud owner of Banjul Breweries and 70 other Breweries spread in 24 African countries."

According to her, the Castel Beer is already making its mark in other African countries, which she profoundly said; Banjul Breweries will make a winner in The Gambia. She further went on point out that the beer has been specifically formulated for Africa and it is a premium lager beer containing 5.2 percent alcohol which is also flavoured with a rich banana and gingerbread aroma and fully rounded spicy flavour. "The label is rich brilliant gold," she added.

She said that Banjul Breweries has a marketing plan that will promote Castel Beer into becoming a household name. She used the occasion to thank, on behalf of the Board of Directors and Management of Banjul Breweries LTD, the government of The Gambia for its support towards the business and tourism sector in The Gambia, the hotels, bars, restaurants and distributors for their continuous support.

She also thanked Joao Carlos Ferreira, the brew master for making this excellent beer. She thanked the team at Banjul Breweries for their loyalty and hard work.

Franck Bœuf, sales and marketing manager at Banjul Breweries said it is because of the good relationship they have with their customers, distributors, the local market and the Gambian people in general that they registered the success they did. He said that the introduction of the Youki family made significant contribution to their success and added that they have seven different flavours including Vimto, Malta and Fruit Cocktail that give them a good coverage of the market for the past years.

He said that the introduction of the new beer will help stop more importation from outside The Gambia. He revealed that they are also looking for ways of developing the business, the production, the skills and knowledge of the Gambian people working with them.

The sales and marketing manager further outlined some of their contributions towards the development of the country particularly in the areas of sports and health. He finally thanked the Gambian people for supporting their business.

Joao Carlos Ferreira, the brew master and technical manager at Banjul Breweries also joined his colleagues in expressing delight over the launching of the new product which he said is a premium beer with high standards. He adding that he hoped the consumers will love the new product. He also said that their prime objective is to improve constantly on their products.

In his statement, Borri Darboe, sales and marketing supervisor/administrator at Banjul Breweries was realistic in pronouncing confidentialities of the new product which he said is aimed at providing their esteemed customers quality with difference. Some of their customers, he added, are enormously in love with their famous Julbrew Lager Beer brand which he said gives their customers the desired taste of a beer. He added that the launching of the new product is of paramount importance to them as service providers. He sincerely acknowledged the contribution of their customers particularly those in the tourism industry.

He said much is expected of them, especially in the provision of the needs of their customers. He pointed out that coming together as a family will boost the already existing relationship between them and their customers which he said is characterized by trust and understanding.

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Banjul Breweries presents tricycles to suppliers

By: Isatou Senghore  
thepoint.gm, Jul 4, 2012

In their quest to make transportation and delivery of drinks across the country simple, Banjul Breweries Ltd on 2 July 2012 presented 15 tricycles to its suppliers.

Speaking at the presentation ceremony held at the company's head office in Kanifing, Borri Darbo, country sales manager of Banjul Breweries, said his company is one that can be chosen for better service and products

"We are second to known in the country," he said, adding that they use the youki tricycles to supply their products all over the country.

For her part, Fatou Sinyan Mergan, Director of Finance at Banjul Breweries, described the day as a very wonderful day as they always cherish their distributors to reach the market.

She also said early this year they were able to engage three main distributors nothing that, a purchase of one big truck called Youki truck cost D3.1 million and was given to the greater Banjul area and two small trucks cost D800, 000 each.

She stated that they also got two additional trucks cost one and half million, which they use to pay the drivers, and the 15 new tricycles cost one million dalasi, adding that they give it out free to their valuable wholesale distributors.

The tricycles given are with one-year licence and maintenance for 10,000 kilometers.

Madam Sinyan emphasised that they are one of the big employers in the country with more than 150 active distributors thus creating more jobs.

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Éric GILSON (Belge), directeur général (juillet 2014-janvier 2020)  
passé par les Brasseries du Congo (2006-2011)  
et les Brasseries du Cameroun (2011-2014)

Managing Director Banjul Breweries Ltd, Banjul - The Gambia (Jul 2014-Jan 2020)

Management of the different functions of the subsidiary, management of the P&L.

Reorganization of the different functions of the company in order to optimize the technical and commercial processes within a framework of cost reduction.

Reconquest of the beer and soft drink market (market leader) by controlling indirect distribution, with the corollary of closing the competing factory producing and marketing Coca Cola.

Launch of new products and maintenance of licensed brands (Guinness, Vimto, etc.).

Optimization of the management of the industrial tool and of the investments by the implementation of dashboards of performance indicators and reduction of the losses.

Restoration of the company's financial equilibrium, allowing the full repayment of the group's debt and a return to dividend payments.

Crisis management.

### L'unique brasserie de Gambie menacée de fermeture (RFI, 19 mai 2019)

En Gambie, la dernière brasserie locale, Banjul Breweries Ltd, est menacée de fermeture, selon ses dirigeants. En cause, l'augmentation de la taxe sur l'alcool, passée de 10 à 75 % pour l'année 2019. Une augmentation votée sans concertation avec la brasserie. Propriété du groupe français Castel, la brasserie de Banjul a été créée dans les années 1970, c'est la plus grosse industrie du pays. Elle produit la JulBrew locale, mais aussi la Castel ou la Guinness et toute une gamme de boissons non alcoolisées. La bière représente 60 % de la production et les ventes sont désormais en baisse. C'est le dossier Afrique économie du jour. Il est signé Romain Chanson à Banjul.

2018 avait été une bonne année pour la brasserie, qui réalisait ses premiers bénéfices depuis 10 ans et le rachat par Castel. De nouveaux salariés devaient être recrutés pour tenir la cadence. Avec la nouvelle imposition sur l'alcool, c'est l'inverse qui s'est produit. 18 ouvriers ont été licenciés, une vingtaine seraient sur le départ.

Souleymane Sané travaille dans le secteur le plus touché, celui de l'embouteillage : « On a diminué de 10 personnes, sur-le-champ. Et là aussi ça affecte notre travail parce que jusqu'à présent on n'a pas diminué les heures de travail. Et ça nous inquiète beaucoup parce qu'on ne sait pas ce que nous réservent les lendemains. Quand un gouvernement s'installe, ce n'est pas pour fermer les entreprises, c'est pour créer des emplois. »

La brasserie de Banjul est la plus grosse industrie de Gambie. Une fermeture du site entraînerait une crise sociale dans le pays, selon Alegie Ceesay, président du syndicat de la brasserie.

« Si on doit fermer à cause de la taxe, 200 personnes vont perdre leur travail. Derrière chaque salarié il y a 3 ou 4 membres d'une même famille qui vivent grâce au salaire versé par l'entreprise. Pas de salaire, ça veut dire pas de quoi se nourrir. Ce n'est pas bon pour la brasserie, ce n'est pas bon pour le gouvernement et ce n'est pas bon pour les Gambiens », souligne-t-il.

Pour un grossiste gambien, le prix d'un casier de bière a augmenté de 60 % du jour au lendemain. Fin avril, les ventes de bière en sortie d'usine avaient baissé d'un quart à cause de la nouvelle taxe. Nuire à la brasserie revient à nuire à l'économie du pays, selon Barri Darboe, directeur des ventes chez Julbrew : « *Banjul Brew est la plus grosse industrie et chaque année elle paie des millions au gouvernement. Donc, nous estimons que la mesure est sévère, brutale, discriminatoire et insoutenable. C'est un investissement français ! On est censé soutenir les investisseurs français en Gambie.* »

C'est toute la filière qui est touchée par la hausse des prix. Grossistes, revendeurs, bars et hôtels. Les complexes qui proposent les formules all inclusives doivent supporter les frais supplémentaires. La bière c'est un produit phare des hôtels de Gambie.

Pour Bunama Njie, président de l'association des hôteliers, le gouvernement a fait un très mauvais calcul : « Peut-être qu'ils vont récolter plus d'impôts de la part des brasseries de Banjul, mais moins d'impôts de la part des hôtels. Et si vous prenez tous les hôtels, on parle ici de plus de 40 établissements. C'est un gros problème pour

l'économie et c'est un gros problème pour l'industrie parce que la Gambie perd en attractivité. »

Au-delà du tourisme, ce sont les Gambiens qui se plaignent d'une baisse continue de leur pouvoir d'achat. Et la bière n'est qu'un exemple secondaire.

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### Banjul Breweries Staff and Wholesalers Stage Sit-Down Strike over Excise Tax The Chronicle On May 21, 2019

Wholesalers and Staff of Banjul Breweries Limited Monday staged a sit-down strike and stopped production to pile pressure on the government to review its excise tax policy.

Scores of protesters who spoke to The Chronicle expressed grievances over what some described as the government's lackluster attitude towards the company since the beginning of the standoff a few weeks ago.

Officials at Banjul Breweries have complained about the tax increase from 10% to 75%, describing it as unfair, unwarranted and an affront to push the company out of business.

"We the wholesalers are here to protest against the excise tax levied on Banjul Breweries Limited as we are afraid that this company may close down anytime soon. We also want to ask the Gambian government not to fold its arms and allow this company to shutdown because if that happens many families will be affected," said Osei Dadu, the Secretary General of Wholesalers Association.

"Imagine we have about 56 wholesalers in the country and each of them are employing between five and twenty people. If all these people have to lose their means of survival the result will definitely be painful. We are calling on the government to intervene so as to amicably solve this issue," he said.

Marie Jarju and Fina Gomez are all women wholesalers who ply their trade in the sale of beverage products from Banjul Breweries. They've asked the government to safeguard the interest of small business owners by stopping Banjul Breweries from closing.

"We want to appeal to the government to intervene on our behalf and help us solve this issue as quickly as possible. If Banjul Breweries Ltd. closes, so many families will suffer."

Justin Marlow, a staff of the breweries company said, "We are more than two hundred staff working here and most of us are married with our children, so if here is to close down then all of our livelihoods will be affected."

With the staff strike, the company was forced to stop operations for an hour.

"To shut down production line for just an hour is a huge lost. These machines produce ten thousand bottles of drinks every hour. What can we do as a company when all of our staff decided to protest? We had to suspend operations," said Borry Darboe, the Sales and Marketing Manager.

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### Gambie : les députés rétro-pédalent sur la taxe sur la bière (RFI, 2 août 2019)

La brasserie de Banjul, menacée par l'augmentation de la taxe sur la bière au début de l'année, est sauvée. Lors d'une session extraordinaire, lundi 29 juillet, l'Assemblée nationale gambienne a finalement revu à la baisse ce taux d'imposition.

En activité depuis 42 ans et propriété du groupe français Castel, la brasserie de Banjul était menacée par l'augmentation de la taxe sur l'alcool depuis le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier, passée de 10 % à 75 %, qui avait fait chuter la vente de bière locale. Plus de 150 emplois directs étaient en jeu. Durant les sept derniers mois, les responsables de la brasserie n'avaient eu de cesse d'alerter sur les dangers économiques d'un tel taux d'imposition.

Éric Gilson, directeur de la brasserie, garde un souvenir amer de ces derniers mois : « Pour un grossiste, l'augmentation sur la vente d'un casier de bière était de 59 %, du jour au lendemain. Il n'y a pas eu de communication, nous n'avons pas été consultés. On va dire que la surprise a été totale, rappelle-t-il. Nous sommes ravis de cette révision à la baisse. Certes, le taux reste élevé, mais c'est encourageant. »

Au mois de juin, la vente de bière était en baisse de 40 % par rapport à l'année passée. Signe que la loi n'était pas assumée, le gouvernement et une partie des parlementaires ont qualifié après coup cette taxe de mesure pour lutter contre l'alcoolisme des jeunes.

La raison était purement financière, avoue le député Dawda Kawsu Jawara, qui regrette une erreur de débutant. « Nous aurions dû faire plus de recherches et mener davantage de consultations avant de réviser et ratifier cette taxe », estime-t-il.

La taxe sur la bière locale est maintenant de 35 % contre 40 % pour la bière importée. Un non-sens économique pour le député, qui rappelle que la balance commerciale de la Gambie est dangereusement déficitaire. Les consommateurs pourront vérifier si les prix ont effectivement baissé dès lundi.

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Emmanuel MÉDARD, directeur général (jan. 2020-août 2020)  
futur directeur général de la Soboa à Dakar (août 2020-février 2023)

En Gambie, le français Castel ne produira plus la célèbre bière Julbrew  
par Romain Chanson (Banjul, correspondance)  
(Le Monde, 6 mai 2020)

Le groupe a décidé de fermer sa brasserie à Banjul, l'une des plus importantes entreprises du pays. Entre 150 et 200 emplois directs sont menacés.

Un martin-chasseur noir et bleu et un crocodile vert citron sont en voie de disparition en Gambie. L'oiseau et le reptile illustrent les étiquettes respectives des bières Julbrew et Julbrew Export, brassées depuis 1977. Mais l'entreprise Banjul Breweries, jugée peu rentable, a annoncé fin mars l'arrêt de la production, sur décision de son propriétaire, le groupe français Castel. Il faut désormais ouvrir les réfrigérateurs de quelques bars et particuliers pour observer une dernière fois ce bestiaire sur bouteille.

Le brasseur, élevé au rang de monument national par ses inconditionnels, a été fragilisé début 2019, quand le gouvernement a subitement choisi de faire passer la taxe sur l'alcool de 10 à 75 %, au point de rendre meilleur marché certaines bières importées. Assoiffé de rentrées financières, le gouvernement aurait-il eu la main un peu lourde ? Certains se désolent du message désastreux envoyé aux compagnies étrangères qui auraient l'idée d'investir en Gambie.

Après plusieurs mois de négociations, le taux a finalement été abaissé à 35 %, mais l'épisode a évidemment pesé dans le choix de fermer la brasserie, l'un des plus gros contribuables du pays avec 3,7 millions d'euros d'impôts par an. Officiellement, c'est néanmoins le manque de rentabilité de l'entreprise qui a scellé son sort : à long terme, un lourd investissement était nécessaire au maintien de la production.

Une « icône » qui fait partie du « patrimoine »

Le choc est d'autant plus rude qu'il survient en pleine crise économique précipitée par l'épidémie liée au coronavirus, qui affecte durement le secteur du tourisme, principale source de revenus du pays. Une coïncidence malheureuse, regrette la direction de Banjul Breweries, qui avait mis fin aux commandes de matières premières avant la pandémie. « Il y a des gens qui travaillent ici depuis plus de trente ans. Où voulez-vous qu'ils aillent travailler ? Qui aura besoin de leurs services ? », s'émeut Alagie Ceesay, président du syndicat maison. Entre 150 et 200 emplois directs sont détruits. Le plan social signé fin avril couvre plus d'un an de salaires.

Chez les grossistes, ce sont plusieurs décennies de relations commerciales qui s'effondrent. En bout de chaîne, les bars n'imaginent pas l'avenir sans les casiers de boissons siglés Banjul Breweries Limited. « Pendant la saison touristique, on vend énormément de Julbrew et les touristes aiment beaucoup ce produit local », témoigne Buba, propriétaire d'un restaurant sur la plage. De même, dans les hôtels, la Julbrew est un produit d'appel bon marché au cœur des offres « all inclusive ».

Fort de quarante ans d'histoire, la petite mousse a dépassé le statut de simple bière. C'est « une bannière pour la Gambie », avance Alain, un résident belge qui en a bu d'autres. Julbrew est une « icône », glorifie une certaine Anne sur un groupe Facebook d'expatriés. « C'était vraiment un symbole, une marque excessivement forte », assure un ancien cadre de la brasserie. « Julbrew fait partie du patrimoine gambien, elle devrait être protégée », défend l'historien Hassoum Ceesay.

L'hypothèse d'une délocalisation au Sénégal

La bière a été embouteillée pour la première fois en septembre 1977 par un maître brasseur allemand travaillant pour le groupe Brauhaase, qui a construit l'usine et élaboré la recette : une lager de qualité, légère, pur malt. Les pionniers racontent qu'elle a été exportée jusqu'en Californie. Trente ans plus tard, les Allemands veulent mettre un terme à leurs activités en Afrique et mettent en vente un lot de trois brasseries : la très convoitée SIAC-Isenbeck au Cameroun, International Breweries au Nigeria et les modestes Banjul Breweries en Gambie.

Une aubaine pour Castel, deuxième producteur de bières et boissons gazeuses sur le continent. Propriétaire depuis 2008, le groupe français investit et développe l'activité. Il distribue ses marques de boissons gazeuses, promeut sa Castel Beer, préserve la recette de la Julbrew et maintient les franchises historiques comme l'irlandaise Guinness. « Puis on est allé dans un bar / où le reggae à fond la caisse / nous faisait boire de la Guinness », chantait le Français Pierre Vassiliu en 1981 sur son titre « Banjul ».

La marque n'est pas dissoute pour autant. La Julbrew pourrait être brassée à Dakar, dans les cuves de la Société des brasseries de l'Ouest africain (Soboa), également propriété de Castel. Ou renaître grâce à de nouveaux investisseurs. Des entrepreneurs locaux ont déjà fait le tour du propriétaire pour évaluer la valeur du bien. « Il y a une vraie place pour une industrie de la boisson dans ce pays », veut croire un cadre de Banjul Breweries.

Dans l'usine vide au toit recouvert de poussière, un tableau blanc témoigne du calendrier de production. La dernière bière brassée dans ses cuves, le 26 mars, fut noire et opaque : une Guinness, pour une fois, un peu trop amère.

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