

Meet Adam Deane of RocoMamas



By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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With a broad range of skills under his belt, Adam Deane sits comfortably in the coveted 'unicorn' category of employees. He's the national brand manager for fast-casual restaurant chain RocoMamas, and working in a small but nimble team, Deane is intimately involved with various aspects of brand development and activity, including design, copywriting, marketing, strategy and in-store experience.



Adam Deane

Here, Deane shares more about his role as RocoMamas' key brand custodian, what drives his commitment to the brand, and some of the campaigns that helped drive customer engagement during the challenging Covid-19 lockdown.

■ As the national brand manager for RocoMamas, what does your job entail and what does your average workday look like these days?

I guess you could say I'm a jack of all trades and master of none :) I look after the RocoMamas and RocoGo brands nationally, across 78 restaurants. Areas from advertising (ATL/BTL/TTL), digital marketing, in-store experience, menus, strategic direction, creative direction, etc. We are a small team and I'm hands-on involved with all areas of the brand.

We are on a journey of resetting to simple, whereby every day we strive to first understand what our customers and followers want. Often us as marketers find our way down somewhat of a rabbit hole and in some instances romanticised by the plethora of tools and tactics.

As RocoMamas we believe in authenticity and intuitive experiences, which predicates the majority of my daily approach to my work. Thinking like a customer, listening to what they engage with, how they speak, what they share on social, what is important to them. Not thinking solely as a marketer has built us up loyalty and a substantial following of customers.



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■ **Can you tell us a bit about your career journey prior to your current role?**

My career has always revolved around the fraternity of marketing and creative inspiration. I spent the majority of my early career in sports marketing with the likes of SA Cricket and Discovery. I then spent 2 years spreading my wings as a both a freelance photographer/designer doing work for City of Johannesburg, Absa and the PSL and semi-professional athlete, before moving to Cape Town to join Spur in their sports marketing department.

Creativity is in my blood and as I found myself in the RocoMamas team I found a space I could bring all my best skills and passions to the forefront and it's been the most inspiring journey of my career thus far.



■ **What do you love most about the RocoMamas brand and working in the food & beverage space?**

RocoMamas is all about being true to yourself. Our founder Brian Altriche has instilled that deep within the brand's DNA and we all live it everyday. The ability to connect with what people value and what excites them, in turn, excites me. Believing in intuition and intrinsic human qualities is what drives me and fits in with the ethos of the RocoMamas brand.

The hospitality industry is always evolving and is about service. You will experience something unique every day and learn about what people value and about yourself. This constant growth is addictive as human interaction, as we've seen more prominently in this past year, is a vital part of society and I am proud to be part of how people come together to feed not only their stomachs but their humanity.

■ **What skills and qualities do you feel are key to being a successful brand custodian?**

I feel you need to be curious and equally brave. In this day and age, building brand and communication means keeping up with a fast-changing world and navigating a delicate approach to connect with your customers. Project management is crucial as we have multiple projects on the go all the time and it's hugely important to know where you are with each one, especially if you are a small team.

Creative prowess and trend watching is also non-negotiable in my view. As a custodian of a brand one needs to have a solid understanding of design principles and what is relevant as it will help immensely when crafting campaigns, material and messaging. In my role, much of our design and copywriting is driven by me and our founder, and in many instances

sitting and being the designers ourselves.

Lastly, I think one needs to be confident and stand by what one believes in. As a brand or marketing manager, a business looks to you for creative and conceptual direction and 9/10 times you know what will or won't work. The key is to stand firm on what you believe will perform and equally be brave enough to admit when something won't.



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■ **How has the pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns affected your work?**

We faced a very tough year. I think as one of the hardest-hit industries, being predicated on people coming together we were faced with a seismic shift in how we approached our business. Fortunately for RocoMamas, we were already a fairly strong takeaway brand by design and through our menu structure.

That being said, we still had to reimagine how we would bring customers the same experience and quality without our restaurant environments. As the months and levels went by we focused on connecting with customers and again, fortunately for us, our collective team efforts have seen us navigating these waters favourably as a brand.

Working from home came with its challenges but it also showed the power of the team we have as we knuckled down and to keep our brand alive despite all odds. Today we are seeing a slow but steady recovery which I believe is due to months and months of small things that helped us climb a big mountain.

■ **In the midst of the pandemic last year, the RocoMamas Comeback Tour campaign brought back 10 popular limited edition burgers for 10 weeks, and encouraged customers to try them all. Can you share the mechanics and rationale behind this campaign?**



Our LTD Edition burgers are a fundamental brand pillar of innovation, where we bring customers burgers they have never seen before – flavours no-one has tried.

As a result, many historic burgers developed a cult following of sorts and we saw an opportunity to give customers something to feel nostalgic about during a time where we all missed things we used to have or do.

We identified 10 of our most popular LTD Editions over the past 5 years and crafted the Comeback Tour to bring back old favourites for a limited time. 10 burgers, 10 weeks, we counted down with the burger changing every week, each one with its own personality.

As you can imagine making weekly changes over 10 weeks, to in-store point of sale, digital, social, etc. was a mammoth task but we saw an amazing response to the campaign. For those customers who purchased all 10 burgers over the 10 weeks, we rewarded them with a gift voucher within our RocoLove

App loyalty programme.

■ **For the RocoMamas Battle Royale campaign, launched in September 2020, you partnered with Red Bull and aligned the campaign with the global launch of the Playstation 5. Can you tell us more about the campaign, and why you believe it resonated with consumers and successfully led to a significant spike in engagement?**

Online gaming saw a boom of epic proportions as the world went into lockdown. The spike in people playing online not only

to entertain themselves but to socialise became an overnight trend. As a brand that tends to look for areas others haven't ventured into we identified online gaming as a focus prior to lockdown, and through our great relationship with the team at Red Bull we identified the opportunity to do something for the gaming community.



Call of Duty Warzone had just released and became the go-to Battle Royale game globally. We crafted the campaign to align with the hugely anticipated release of the Playstation 5 and invited customers to purchase the Battle Royale meal and enter by sharing how it fits into their gaming lifestyle. By crafting our messaging and creative acutely to the community we saw an incredible response to how customers created their photos and videos to enter.

As a brand rooted in authenticity it was important for us to show our investment and support of the gaming community. The campaign worked so well across all our touchpoints, because it made gamers both new and old feel included, which said something about what they value. Being the first brand (to my knowledge) to give away a PS5 also spoke to our brand's agility and ability to identify relevance and bring value to customers.

🎯 ***What have you found to be the most successful channels for getting your brand message out there?***

Social has been our primary driver from day one of the brand. As a small brand starting off we went for customer adoption and advocacy through their own experiences. Hence, till today, regramming customers' photos and videos is still a core pillar for our social media marketing. It's sharing what customers say about our brand, not what we say about ourselves.

We recently surpassed 100k followers on Instagram making us the largest SA restaurant brand on Instagram. We gravitate towards digital as that is the native space of our target market and again, 2020 confirmed our approach placed us in a strong position not having to "migrate" into digital.

Social has its nuances which one needs to understand. Not every platform can utilise the same approach; they all have their type of individual and best practice in terms of content and message. We have spent years understanding this and honing our approach to each one.





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A post shared by RocoMamas® (@rocomamas)



❏ If you were mentoring a future you, what career advice would you give to an aspiring young marketing and branding professionals?

Live your truth, each and every person has their unique strengths and viewpoint. The more comfortable you are within your own skin, the clearer your decision-making will be.

Don't be scared to get your hands dirty. There is immeasurable value in learning how to do things that aren't your job as any business is the sum of its parts, and you will be better off gaining an understanding of as many facets as possible.

Do what makes you happy and ignites passion inside you. We all have things that excite us and it's vitally important to find what that is for you, a brand or medium that resonates with you, and go in that direction with everything you have. As the saying goes, "finding something that makes you happy is 100 times more valuable than something that makes you rich."

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