

Woolworths apologises for copycat Ubuntu Baba carrier

NEWSWATCH: Woolworths has removed a line of baby carriers from its shelves following a meeting with Cape Town entrepreneur Shannon McLaughlin, who claimed the retailer had copied the design of her Ubuntu Baba carrier.



Image credit: Ubuntu Baba

Earlier this week, McLaughlin detailed in her [blog post](#) that the corporate copied the baby carriers that she designs and sells through her Ubuntu Baba business. She explained that Woolworths copied the actual design of her carrier, as well as the product's names. She also discovered that Woolworths Head Office had purchased two carriers in 2017.

In her post, she noted that Woolworths is able to sell their carrier at one-third of the price that Ubuntu Baby sells theirs, because Woolies carriers are manufactured in China using polyester while Ubuntu Baby products are made in South Africa from organic hemp.



Woolworths accused of copying baby carrier design

9 Jan 2019



Woolworths held off publicly responding to the claim until they'd met with McLaughlin on Wednesday to discuss the matter. Following this meeting, the retailer tweeted that it had completed the investigation into the allegations of copying and conceded that there were "striking similarities" between the Ubuntu Baba baby carrier and the Woolworths version.

The company issued a public statement apologising for the incident and committed to pulling the product from its physical stores and online shop. Customers who have purchased the baby carrier in question can return it for a full refund.

“ We met with Ubuntu Baba today and have completed our investigation into the allegations of copying.

While there are differences in our baby carrier, there are striking similarities which we acknowledge and take responsibility for.— Woolworths SA (@WOOLWORTHS_SA) [January 9, 2019](#) ”

"While there are differences in our baby carrier, there are striking similarities which we acknowledge and take responsibility for. This is not in line with our values and goes against the very clear policy and creative guidelines we have in place for our design process. This lapse in process is being addressed internally. We are intensifying and strengthening the training of our people, our suppliers and partners on our values-based approach to the design and sourcing process," Woolworths said.

"We have sincerely apologised to Shannon personally and we would like to offer our heartfelt apologies to our customers who expect more from us. We are removing all product from our stores and online. Customers who wish to return their product may do so for a full refund.

"We remain deeply committed to the development of small businesses in South Africa," the retailer concluded.

McLaughlin has shared an update on the situation in a new blog post. [Read it here.](#)

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