

Turning excess fabrics destined for landfills into unique luggage covers

 By [Cari Coetzee](#)

8 Feb 2017

Samsonite SA has partnered with [Uzwelo Bags](#), an Expand A Sign initiative, that designed and manufactured unique, eye-catching luggage covers that will ensure that you never miss your bag on that overcrowded carousel ever again. We spoke to Uzwelo Bags COO, Tanya Bailey to find out more about what makes the luggage covers so special.



Tanya Bailey

Tell us about the luggage covers – what lies behind the design?

Tanya Bailey: Most people find it challenging to find their suitcase on the airport carousel and I believe that good luggage is an investment that should be protected. These common travelling challenges inspired the Expand A Sign team to come up with a new Uzwelo product.

It was important to everyone involved that the design incorporated functionality, security, and protection of the luggage itself. Our aim was to use excess waste fabric donated by Expand A Sign (and woven by Expand A Sign), to create employment opportunities and to contribute to improving our environment through a percentage of sales being donated to [The Bateleurs Conservation Organisation](#).

Take us through the design process

Bailey: We first identified the top selling Samsonite brands and focused on covers for the small, medium and large cases. We focused on ease of use, adaptability and stretch to accommodate those suitcases that are filled to capacity. We all relished the creativity in producing covers that would always be unique and easily identifiable when travelling. No two covers will ever be the same and we loved the idea of seeing bold and bright colours on the carousels at airports and other transport hubs.

How are they manufactured?

Bailey: The suitcase covers are cut to pattern here at Uzwelo out of the excess waste fabric from Expand A Sign and along with all the hardware required, are delivered to our community partners to make up for us. Once the covers are complete we collect the finished product, quality check and clean for packaging to Samsonite. All logistics and hardware purchasing along with marketing and sales remain the responsibility of Uzwelo. It is our vision to send work out to communities so that these areas are uplifted and keep growing.



Samsonite and Uzwelo Luggage Cover

▣ **What inspired Uzwelo to create the bags?**

Bailey: We are constantly looking for new products to make, in order to use the excess fabric we receive, and to create a platform for creativity and positive conscious environmental impact. We have always commented on the “black” suitcases we constantly see the world over and the lack of colour, so this was such a happy product to work with.

▣ **What makes the luggage covers unique/special?**



Samsonite and Uzwelo luggage cover

Bailey: The fact that we are always receiving different prints mean that no two covers will ever be the same - and so are truly unique. But far more importantly is our story of reinventing a use for fabric that was otherwise destined for a landfill site. Secondly, the employment opportunity creation element, which is hugely important to us, and finally that for each Uzwelo Bag, a 5% donation is made to The Bateleurs Conservation Organisation.

Why partner with House of Samsonite? What makes the partnership beneficial and how important is partnering with the right retailer?

Bailey: The partnership with the [House of Samsonite](#) is vital to us not only because of the well-earned respect that Samsonite commands in its own right, but because they are willing to walk alongside us and to actively share in our story. We strive to look for connections with like-minded organisations with a vision to make our own communities and environment stronger. Partnering with the House of Samsonite was a very logical choice.

Tom O’Flaherty of Samsonite South Africa was fantastic to work alongside from the get go. His eagerness to partner in our journey and the whole Uzwelo Story has been so rewarding and encouraging. He has a wealth of knowledge of his products and market which made the design process so much smoother.

We are all South Africans who want to see our country succeed and through this venture, we are actively playing our part and it feels fantastic.

ABOUT CARI COETZEE

- ▣ Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.
- ▣ #WTMA18: Bringing Africa to New York and New York to Africa - 15 Jun 2018
- ▣ Authentic African experiences with Tented Adventures - 1 Jun 2018
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