

Vukile's Diski FanFest proves CSI and marketing can score the same goal

The 2026 Diski FanFest tour engaged thousands across Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and left behind 288 soccer kits, 1,200 soccer balls and fresh skills for youth clubs



Vukile Property Fund's 2026 Diski FanFest has concluded a tour that delighted thousands of shoppers, players and coaches across three provinces and proved, once again, that community investment and mall marketing can deliver on the very same weekend.

Diski FanFest is the specialist retail property group's national community soccer campaign. Now in its second year, Vukile, which owns shopping malls and centres throughout South Africa, chose Dobsonville Mall in Soweto, Gauteng to kick off the three-weekend tour at the beginning of July. It then moved to Gugulethu Square in the Western Cape and the final whistle blew at Hammarisdale Junction, KwaZulu-Natal.

The Diski FanFest is built to work on two levels. It pairs mall-based fan activations with direct investment in local youth soccer development with South African soccer legend Doc Khumalo and delivers meaningful outcomes for both.



"This kind of integration is a natural fit for Vukile's shopper-centric model. Our malls are built around the communities they serve, from township and rural centres to urban and commuter hubs, which means the same shoppers who benefit from local soccer development are also the customers walking through the doors," comments Itumeleng Mothibeli, Managing Director Southern Africa at Vukile Property Fund.

An activation that genuinely matters to a community, builds the kind of loyalty that a conventional marketing spend struggles to buy.

"To us, community investment and mall marketing are one and the same. The Diski FanFest campaign demonstrates this by investing in local soccer talent while bringing customers through our doors. It also gives shoppers a great experience and another reason to return, knowing that their support helps strengthen the communities they are part of. That's the approach we're applying to the marketing of all our malls across the country," says Marijke Coetzee, Director of Marketing and Communications at Vukile Property Fund.



Giving children the chance to play, learn and grow

Soccer holds a singular place in South African life, yet access to basic equipment remains out of reach for many children in under-resourced communities. Research consistently links regular sport participation to improved physical health, stronger performance at school and lower rates of anxiety and depression among young people. Team play builds the cooperation, discipline and leadership that carry into the classroom and beyond.

The impact extends past the final whistle. In communities where children face real risks after school, structured play offers a safe and supervised alternative. Sport-based diversion is a proven strategy among South African community organisations.

This year's tour again left a measurable mark on the communities it visited. Vukile's Diski FanFest directly engaged more than 272 youth players from 17 local soccer teams, with 36+ local soccer coaches involved in mentorship and coaching clinics.

Players and coaches alike found themselves in the presence of South African soccer icon Doc Khumalo, who led coaching sessions, mentored young players and spent time engaging with local teams. For Doc Khumalo, the Diski Fan Fest is about giving back to the sport that has given him so much, inspiring the next generation and bringing communities together to share in the spirit of the game.

Fully equipped and match ready

Brand-new, professional-grade kits and training gear – whistles, stop watches, first-aid kits and captains' arm bands -- were distributed to 17 local youth clubs across the three tour stops, giving a boost to a wide range of teams, including women's soccer, in the communities. That's 16 team kits per club, bringing the total to 288 kits.

1,200 soccer balls were also put into play for South Africa's youth. In communities where children improvise with rolled-up plastic bags, a real ball transforms informal play into something closer to the actual game, with proper ball control, passing and shooting practice.

Because soccer is inherently communal, one ball doesn't serve one child; it serves twenty or thirty at a time, day after day, and represents hundreds of hours of play. The soccer balls given out through the Diski FanFest have the potential to reach an estimated 36,000 young South Africans through the simple mathematics of the beautiful game: one ball, shared by up to thirty children at a time. Few donations have that kind of multiplier effect per Rand spent.

But the real story is the positive legacy the tour has left behind for the coaches and clubs on the ground. Participating clubs told a consistent story across all three venues. Coaches and players spoke again and again about the pride and confidence that came with wearing a full, matching kit for the first time, and the boost to team spirit and identity that followed.



Meeting and learning from Doc Khumalo in person was the standout moment for most clubs, with several describing it as a rare, once-in-a-lifetime experience that reignited hope, discipline and purpose among their players. A number of clubs also pointed to the wider community value of keeping young people engaged in structured, supervised sport, and were united in hoping the Diski FanFest becomes a recurring fixture on their calendar.

A boost for shopper experience

In addition to the young players and their coaches, the event was enjoyed by thousands across the three activation weekends, with around 2,300 people interacting directly with Diski FanFest activities. They were delighted by foosball tables, selfie photo installations, and "Jump for It" walls that had both kids and adults leaping to new heights. Events were designed to appeal to the entire family and included workshops for the kids, live entertainment, and a dedicated kids' zone so the little ones could get in on the action too. The marketing results for the shopping centres speak for themselves. Combined shopper footfall at the participating malls increased 6.78% year-on-year, led by Gugulethu Square, which recorded a nearly 10% increase in visitors over the event weekend.

A powerful tenant partnership platform at play

The activation's value showed up on tenants' tills, especially those offering footwear and food. Retailers across all categories confirmed feeling the benefit of the vibrant atmosphere and engaged customers.

Vukile's Diski FanFest also created a platform for powerful tenant partnerships. Matching the passion of Vukile and its malls, likeminded tenants added their own sponsorship to the event's success. JAM Clothing stepped up to sponsor the six full soccer kits given away at the Gugulethu Square event to the value of R40,000. Here Lover's Market also provided 300 meals for participating teams amounting to R20,000. At Hammarisdale Junction, KFC awarded 225 gold medals and sling bags while also providing team meals, and Boxer contributed a R2,500 voucher prize. These partnerships added a unique local signature to every event.

Where CSI meets marketing

The results demonstrate that the Diski FanFest is achieving exactly what it was designed to do: create lasting value for local communities while strengthening the shopping centres at the heart of those communities. By bringing together meaningful community investment and engaging retail experiences, Vukile is showing that CSI and marketing can reinforce one another rather than compete for attention or budget.

"The numbers tell us that the impact of our Diski FanFest goes well beyond one campaign and one weekend. It's an investment that leaves a positive legacy in every community while building greater loyalty to each mall. Seeing that grow is driving Vukile to create even more campaigns in this model," says Coetzee.

The Diski FanFest returns to South Africa's malls in 2027, with Vukile and its partners already planning to build on this year's reach and impact.

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