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PRESSURE BUILDS, OPPORTUNITY ACCELERATES

South Africa's heavy commercial vehicle (HCV) market stands at a defining crossroads. It is a sector shaped as much by constraint as by potential - tested by infrastructure fragility and economic headwinds, yet energised by reform, regional trade growth and technological transition.

On the challenge side, operators continue to navigate a difficult operating environment. Logistics bottlenecks at key ports, inconsistent rail performance, deteriorating road infrastructure and persistent load-shedding have added cost and complexity to fleet management. Rising input prices - from fuel and tyres to imported components affected by currency volatility - have tightened margins. Access to affordable finance remains uneven, particularly for smaller operators, while regulatory compliance requirements grow steadily more demanding.

At the same time, the freight task itself is shifting. With rail underperforming, more freight has migrated onto roads, accelerating wear on both vehicles and infrastructure. This increases maintenance costs while intensifying pressure on fleet uptime and asset lifecycle management. Skills shortages, from qualified technicians to experienced drivers, further complicate operational resilience.

Yet, within these constraints lie significant opportunities.

South Africa remains the most sophisticated truck market on the continent, with a well-established dealer network, advanced telematics adoption and strong OEM representation. The country's role as a gateway to sub-Saharan Africa positions it strategically for cross-border logistics expansion, particularly as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) gathers momentum. Infrastructure investment programmes unlock further freight growth in mining, agriculture, construction and renewable energy.

Technology is another powerful lever. Telematics, predictive maintenance, fuel-efficiency optimisation and fleet data analytics are no longer optional extras, they are central to competitiveness. Electrification and alternative fuels, while still nascent in the heavy segment locally, are beginning to enter boardroom discussions as sustainability targets tighten and global OEM strategies filter into the South African market. Operators that proactively adapt to this transition stand to gain first-mover advantages.

The resilience of South Africa's freight operators should not be underestimated. Historically, the sector has demonstrated an ability to adapt quickly to structural shocks, whether economic downturns, regulatory changes or supply chain disruptions. The current environment is no different. Those who invest in reliability, partnerships, skills development and data-driven decision-making will be best positioned to convert volatility into growth.

The heavy commercial vehicle market in South Africa is not without its obstacles. But it is precisely in navigating these headwinds that opportunity emerges. For manufacturers, dealers, financiers and fleet owners alike, the next phase will reward agility, innovation and long-term thinking.

Wilhelm du Plessis -
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SCANIA

MAXIMISING VALUE IN CONSTRUCTION: HITACHI'S MEDIUM EXCAVATOR RANGE

In today's competitive construction environment, equipment buyers can no longer justify decisions based on upfront purchase price alone. Success on site is increasingly driven by total cost of ownership - a balanced combination of acquisition cost, uptime, productivity, operating efficiency, support, and long-term asset value.

Hitachi's medium excavator range, spanning machines from roughly 13 to 35 tonnes operating weight, is engineered to deliver this advantage across a breadth of construction applications, from earthworks and infrastructure to utilities, landscaping, and heavy-duty material handling.

Right-sized machines for diverse tasks

The beauty of a medium range is versatility. Excavators at approximately 13 tonnes excel in urban and tight-access jobs. Their compact footprint and nimble controls make them ideal where precision matters – digging foundations close to buildings, trenching in confined corridors, and executing detailed site preparation. These units strike a compelling balance between power and maneuverability, making them preferred choices for general contractors who demand capability without compromise.

Stepping up to around 20 to 22 tonnes, machines become true workhorses. This is the sweet spot for mixed-duty contractors who swing between bulk excavation and heavier digging tasks. With robust

QUICK TAKE

Excavators at approximately 13 tonnes excel in urban and tight-access jobs.

Hitachi's strong global brand, combined with proven reliability and broad parts availability, ensures that medium excavators hold value in resale markets.

Hitachi medium excavators integrate fuel-efficient engine technology and hydraulic systems that optimise power delivery without waste.

Accessible service panels, extended maintenance intervals, and modular components reduce labour time and parts costs over the machine's life.

undercarriage design and ample breakout force, these excavators handle challenging soils, utility trenches, drainage installations, and large scale landscape reshaping.

Their size delivers greater reach and depth without sacrificing transportability between urban and regional sites.

At the upper end of the range, machines near 35 tonnes bring substantial power for heavy earthmoving. These are the units that drive productivity on large civil construction projects, roadworks, and aggregate handling. With high lifting capacity and torque, they move material faster and more efficiently, supporting faster cycle times and reduced labour costs.

Across all weights, Hitachi's philosophy remains consistent: equip every machine with intuitive controls, robust hydraulics, and integrated systems that enable operators to work smarter and more productively.

Competitive upfront pricing - premium brand, smart choice

Traditionally, contractors balance brand prestige against budget constraints. Hitachi challenges the assumption that premium quality must come with

prohibitive pricing. The medium excavator line is competitively positioned against peers in each weight class, offering attractive acquisition costs that appeal to fleet planners and owner-operators alike.

This doesn't mean sacrificing quality. Hitachi machines are built with durable components, precision engineering, and proven reliability. What it does mean is that buyers benefit from a lower capital outlay relative to the value received - a compelling proposition when tendering for projects with tight margins.

Performance - the heart of productivity

For contractors, downtime is lost revenue. A key component of total operating cost is how much time a machine spends working, not waiting for parts or repairs. Hitachi Construction Machinery's design ethos emphasises durability and ease of serviceability. Reinforced structures, optimised hydraulics, and high-quality manufacturing translate to fewer unexpected stops and consistent performance across demanding conditions.

Advanced diagnostics and onboard monitoring systems help identify service needs before they become faults. Scheduled maintenance is streamlined, reducing delays and making it easier for technicians to keep machines in peak condition.

Performance is equally important. Medium excavators in this range are tuned for balanced power delivery, strong breakout force, responsive hydraulics, and smooth slew functions, enabling operators to complete tasks faster with less effort. Whether breaking into compacted ground, lifting heavy buckets, or positioning materials at height, these machines maintain productive cycles throughout the workday.

Maintenance costs and after-sales support

Owning equipment involves more than acquisition and operation, it includes maintenance and long-term servicing. Hitachi medium excavators are engineered for service efficiency. Accessible service panels, extended maintenance intervals, and modular components reduce labour time and parts costs over the machine's life.

Equally important is the support network behind the machine. Hitachi's authorised service channels provide contractors with rapid access to parts, certified technicians, and expert advice. This network ensures that when downtime is required, it is managed swiftly and cost-effectively.

Fuel economy - working smarter for lower costs

Fuel accounts for a significant portion of operating expenses, especially on high-usage sites. Hitachi medium excavators integrate fuel-efficient engine technology and hydraulic systems that optimize power delivery without waste.

Smart engine management reduces unnecessary revving during idle and light load conditions. Combined with hydraulics that adapt flow to demand, this results in measurable savings across a wide range of applications. For contractors working long hours or under competitive bid conditions, even modest improvements in fuel economy can substantially lower operating expenses over a machine's life.

Furthermore, modern control systems empower operators to select performance modes that match task requirements, for example, eco modes for trenching and grading, or high-power modes for heavy digging. These selectable modes optimize consumption without affecting productivity.

Strong resale value - protecting your investment

An often-overlooked driver of total cost of ownership is resale performance. A well-maintained machine with a strong market reputation can command high residual value when it's time to upgrade or downsize. Hitachi's strong global brand, combined with proven reliability and broad parts availability, ensures that medium excavators hold value in resale markets.

This translates into lower annual depreciation costs, a benefit that positively affects fleet replacement planning, financing terms, and overall asset management strategies.

Conclusion

In the world of construction, machines are more than tools, they are strategic assets. Hitachi's medium excavator range, spanning from approximately 13 to 35 tonnes, is engineered to deliver a comprehensive Total Operating Cost Advantage. Competitive upfront pricing, robust performance, maximised uptime, fuel efficiency, manageable maintenance, and strong resale value combine to make these machines smart investments for contractors who demand productivity without compromising profitability.

By focusing on real costs over the lifecycle, not just the sticker price, construction companies can gain the performance they need while protecting their bottom line.

Excavators at approximately 13 tonnes excel in urban and tight-access jobs.

Hitachi's strong global brand, combined with proven reliability and broad parts availability, ensures that medium excavators hold value in resale markets.

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KAL TIRE - STRATEGIC TYRE MANAGEMENT FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA'S MINES

Juanita Pienaar spoke with John Martin, Vice President, Southern Africa, Kal Tire's Mining Tire Group, about the company's growing footprint in Southern Africa, its strategic approach to tyre management, and the innovations reshaping uptime and sustainability across mine sites.

TALKING POINT

Kal Tire is heavily invested in our on-site services, technical services, and tyre management that is recorded in Kal Tire's proprietary TOMS (Tire & Operations Management System).

John Martin, Vice President, Southern Africa, Kal Tire's Mining Tire Group.

A growing footprint across Africa

Kal Tire's presence on the African continent stretches back nearly two decades. "Kal Tire has been operating on the African continent since 2007," explains Martin, "where we currently have a business presence in eight countries, with four being in West Africa and four in Southern Africa."

Within Southern Africa, the company's operational focus centres on Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa, with "a small presence at this time, in Mozambique." From these hubs, Kal Tire supports a broad network of operations. "We have more than 1 100 team members across the region serving more than 80 mine sites across all commodities, covering both surface and underground operations."

The reach extends beyond its core operational bases. Martin notes that Kal Tire "additionally serves customers in just about every country in the region, including the DRC, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and customers operating in North Africa."

Transformation and sustainability form

Within Southern Africa, the company's operational focus centres on Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa, with a smaller presence in Mozambique.

The company's approach encompasses the full tyre lifecycle.

Transformation and sustainability form an important part of the company's regional strategy.

Performance is measured in operational impact rather than simply tyre hours.

Kal Tire is heavily invested in our on-site services, technical services, and tyre management, which is recorded in Kal Tire's proprietary TOMS (Tire & Operations Management System), which is, together with our tyre technicians, at the heart of the full range of services we offer to our customers.

an important part of the company's regional strategy. "For our South African operations, we have been fully B-BBEE compliant from a transformational and sustainability perspective for some years already," he says. The business is also "embarking on a similar transformational journey in Zambia, which will provide economic and developmental benefit to the Zambian communities, which will be in place by mid-2026."

At the operational core, the company places significant emphasis on on-site service capability and data-driven tyre management. "Kal Tire is heavily invested in our on-site services, technical services, and tyre management that is recorded in Kal Tire's proprietary TOMS (Tire & Operations Management System), which is, together with our tyre technicians, at the heart of the full range of services we offer to our customers."

Independent supply, lifecycle thinking

In a market often dominated by manufacturer-aligned supply models, Kal Tire positions itself differently. "Kal Tire is a multi-brand dealer, and we also offer unique retreading and repair services, including KalPRO™ Ultra Repair, Ultra Tread, and retreads," says Martin.

Crucially, the business is independent. "Kal Tire is fully independent, with no ownership by any manufacturer, allowing Kal Tire to source and supply any brand of tyre that makes the best economic sense to the operational management." For mines navigating fluctuating commodity prices and tightening margins, this flexibility is a significant advantage.

However, tyre supply is only part of the equation. Today's mining operations are under increasing pressure to improve environmental performance and meet

ESG commitments. Martin points out that "today's mines are placing greater focus on sustainability, as well as the requirements of the ESG charter, so our tyre supply and tyre life solutions allow us to help customers improve productivity, contribute to their sustainability goals, and reduce their carbon footprint and tyre longevity."

The company's approach encompasses the full tyre lifecycle. "Kal Tire's wide range of services includes the management of tyres from the point of manufacture, through to the end of the tyre's useful life," he explains. "Through several initiatives and unique innovations, we can extend the life of mining tyres, generating much-needed returns for our customers, on the significant amount of capital invested in the tyres."

When tyres truly reach the end of their operational life, Kal Tire is also addressing the disposal challenge. "Once the tyre casings have genuinely reached their end of life, our KalPRO Thermal Conversion OTR tyre recycling technology, in use in Chile, gives mines the most sustainable, ethical and circular way to dispose of their tyres."

This lifecycle thinking – from sourcing and fitment to repair, retreading and responsible disposal – reflects a broader shift in how mines evaluate tyre performance: not simply as a consumable, but as a strategic asset.

Tyre management as strategy

Across global operations, Kal Tire describes itself not merely as a supplier, but as a long-term partner. "Kal Tire is a mining tyre service and supply partner for mines across five continents, across a wide range of commodities," says Martin. "We have over 50 years of tyre service expertise and tyre performance insights to bring to our customers' sites."

This experience underpins what he calls a strategic approach to tyre management. "Our approach to tyre management is a strategic one to ensure our work supports each mine's operational goals and at every stage of tyre life."

Importantly, performance is measured in operational impact rather than simply tyre hours. "Tyre work, for us, isn't just about hours of tyre life, it's about keeping trucks hauling as safely and productively as possible."

At the centre of this strategy is KalPRO TOMS. "Focusing specifically on strategy and optimising tyre performance, TOMS is central to our work," Martin explains. "TOMS is a proactive maintenance planning platform that identifies, schedules, and aggregates required tyre work to provide planning teams with timely information to minimise unplanned equipment downtime."

The impact is tangible. "Together, this ensures we're extending tyre life and improving safety while enhancing fleet use."

Artificial intelligence plays a growing role. "AI is a core feature of TOMS, supporting site teams to ensure all required tyre work can be planned effectively and spare inventory levels managed." Given the scale of modern mining fleets, this is no small task. "With typical mine service teams managing over 400 tyres (and larger sites up to 2 000 tyres), TOMS helps avoid unnecessary downtime and can reduce tyre-related downtime events by 20% or more."

On the ground, access to accurate data is critical. "The TOMS app ensures our team members have access to the most up-to-date information for making informed decisions and the efficient capture of required inspection and shop work information."

Performance transparency further strengthens decision-making. "Service delivery performance visibility is key to effective decision making and strategy," Martin adds. "Kal Tire uses PowerBI dashboards to provide a suite of almost live reporting solutions to Kal Tire service and customer teams. These provide standardised reporting across all Kal Tire service sites and enable performance trending and benchmarking."

Through several initiatives and unique innovations, we can extend the life of mining tyres, generating much-needed returns for our customers, on the significant amount of capital invested in the tyres.

For mine managers, this combination of AI-driven planning and near real-time reporting translates into greater predictability and control – two critical levers in high-value, high-risk operations.

Innovations that protect uptime

Reducing downtime and operating costs remains a constant priority for mining companies. According to Martin, "helping mines boost productivity as well as tyre life and safety has driven Kal Tire's innovation programme."

Among the most notable developments is KalPRO TireSight. "TireSight autonomous inspections can detect different kinds of tyre damage without haul trucks even needing to stop," he explains. "It significantly improves the quality and frequency of inspections and reduces technicians' exposure to trucks and autonomous operation areas, which will become increasingly important as mine sites automate."

Complementing this is KalPRO HaulSight. "HaulSight, our latest offering, gives our customers instant alerts about hazards such as spillage or road undulations that could damage trucks and tyres or impact cycle speeds and fuel burn." By identifying and addressing these hazards early, "this is keeping roads at their best so trucks spend less time in the shop and more time hauling."

Integration is key. "Both HaulSight and TireSight integrate with TOMS, automating work orders and ensuring priority tyre and road work is addressed when needed." The value proposition is clear: "Every hour and every day we keep a truck on the road represents significant value for our customers."

Behind the technology are dedicated teams. "On any mine we serve, dedicated on-site teams and 24/7 remote condition monitoring experts play a critical role in executing the tyre management strategy and using these innovations to their fullest." Kal Tire's Reliability Analyst teams add another layer of optimisation. "Our Reliability Analyst teams help to maximise the output of KalPRO technologies by identifying patterns and developing strategies with customers and OEM partners to increase asset performance."

Safety remains a central pillar of innovation. "At Kal Tire, we also feel it's our responsibility to make our work around the wheel as safe as possible," says Martin. The company's Innovation Centre in Canada has developed tools to protect technicians while improving efficiency.

These include "GATR (Gravity Assist Tooling Rig), which supports the weight of heavy tools, like torque guns; and WheelJaws, which removes technicians from the danger zone during the final steps of mounting and dismounting assemblies."

Sometimes, the simplest innovations deliver significant impact. "One tool we've developed that's now available to mine sites everywhere via Haltec and AME that is simple and impactful is ValveShield, which protects flying rocks from displacing valve stems, which can lead to leaks, tyre damage, and downtime."

Data-driven value in action

While technology and tools are impressive in their own right, their real value lies in measurable results. TOMS, with its AI-driven aggregation of work, enables customers to "aggregate work more effectively using AI functionality to support planning," ensuring that tyre-related tasks are scheduled strategically rather than reactively.

The outcome is fewer unplanned stoppages, improved safety performance, and extended tyre life – all of which translate into stronger returns on one of the mine's most significant operating costs.

Across Southern Africa, where mines operate in challenging conditions and under increasing pressure to deliver more with less, the ability to integrate independent supply, lifecycle services, AI-enabled planning, and safety-focused innovation positions Kal Tire as more than a tyre provider. It becomes, in Martin's words, a partner focused on one overriding goal: "keeping trucks hauling as safely and productively as possible." ✪

VERSATILE ROLLERS AND INTELLIGENT COMPACTION GIVE GOSCOR THE EDGE IN EFFICIENCY

Juanita Pienaar spoke with Goscor Sales and Rental Director, Siviwe Gushu, to explore how the company is redefining construction compaction with innovative roller designs and smart technology. From reducing downtime to improving efficiency, Goscor is helping contractors tackle projects with greater confidence and cost-effectiveness.

TALKING POINT

"One of the key factors to consider when calculating total cost of ownership is the warranty period. This is critical because should anything fail during this period, the customer will not be out of pocket

Goscor Sales and Rental Director, Siviwe Gushu.

Dual-purpose rollers offering flexibility on site

Goscor offers rollers in two sizes: a 12-ton and a 20-ton model, each available with a smooth drum or a padfoot drum. What sets these machines apart, according to Gushu, is the removable padfoot shell. "The padfoot shells come as an attachment that can be removed and then fitted back on. The benefit of this feature is that you can buy one roller, and use it as both a padfoot (with the attachment on) and as a smooth drum (attachment off)," he explains.

This flexibility has already delivered tangible results for clients. "We currently have a 20-ton excavator building a road between Bloemfontein and Kroonstad. This is a success story for us because the client initially asked for two rollers but was relieved when we were able to offer him one roller that could do both padfoot and smooth compaction," Gushu says. By providing machines that serve dual purposes, Goscor helps clients save on capital expenditure while maintaining productivity.

Data-driven compaction

Beyond hardware, Goscor is integrating technology to enhance operational efficiency. Intelligent Compaction (IC) technology is at the heart of this approach, equipping rollers with sensors to provide real-time data about soil conditions, engine temperature, and compaction performance. "Intelligent Compaction technology is all about data collection. This data allows for proper planning and scheduling, proactive maintenance, and minimised downtime," Gushu explains.

He adds that the technology also guides operators on optimal equipment settings for each job. "With the data, the operator

is informed about the optimal settings on the equipment for each job. It removes the risk of rework due to over- or under-compaction, hence improving efficiency on the project." For contractors, this means projects are completed faster and more accurately, saving both time and money.

Looking beyond the purchase price

Gushu emphasises that selecting construction equipment is about more than just the initial purchase cost. Total cost of ownership involves factoring in warranties, spare parts, and service support. "One of the key factors to consider when calculating total cost of ownership is the warranty period. The Goscor warranty on our rollers is one year or 2 000 hours, whichever comes first. This is critical because should anything fail during this period, the customer will not be out of pocket," he says.

He also highlights the importance of spare part availability. "It's not only about pricing, but also availability, because downtime due to part availability also comes at a cost." By ensuring parts are accessible, Goscor helps clients maintain continuous operation and avoid project

The differentiator lies in aftermarket support

While durable machines are important, Gushu is clear that Goscor's true

Goscor helps clients save on capital expenditure while maintaining productivity.

Goscor is integrating technology to enhance operational efficiency and Intelligent Compaction (IC) technology is at the heart of this approach.

By combining innovation, flexibility, and comprehensive support, Goscor is helping contractors deliver projects more efficiently and cost-effectively than ever before.

With projects ranging from road construction to large-scale civil works, Goscor's solutions are making a measurable impact.

With the data, the operator is informed about the optimal settings on the equipment for each job. It removes the risk of rework due to over- or under-compaction, hence improving efficiency on the project.

Our service department has more than 30 roadside technicians who are able to get to any site in SA. All of these contribute to ensuring that we can maintain the highest possible levels of uptime.

advantage lies in its service support. "Our aftermarket support is the key differentiator when it comes to our offering. Yes, we offer quality and durable machines, but even more importantly, we offer world-class service support for our equipment," he says.

Goscor's national footprint enables it to respond quickly to clients across South Africa. "Our service department has more than 30 roadside technicians who are able to get to any site in SA. All of these contribute to ensuring that we can maintain the highest possible levels of uptime," Gushu adds. For contractors, this reliability translates into fewer interruptions, reduced operational stress, and greater project predictability.

Meeting client needs with innovation

Gushu notes that many of Goscor's innovations are driven by listening to client needs. "Our approach is simple: understand what the client requires and provide a solution that is both practical and efficient," he says. The dual-purpose rollers and IC technology reflect this philosophy, giving contractors tools that adapt to a range of conditions and tasks.

With projects ranging from road construction to large-scale civil works, Goscor's solutions are making a measurable impact. "The client who initially requested two rollers on our road project was pleasantly surprised that one machine could meet both needs. It's these kinds of practical solutions that make our offerings so valuable," Gushu emphasises.

A future of smarter, more efficient projects

Gushu sees technology and support as inseparable elements of successful construction projects. "When clients invest in our equipment, they're not just buying machines; they're buying confidence, backed by data and service that ensures uptime," he explains. By combining innovation, flexibility, and comprehensive support, Goscor is helping contractors deliver projects more efficiently and cost-effectively than ever before.

For the South African construction sector, where deadlines are tight and projects often operate under challenging conditions, this approach is increasingly vital. Gushu concludes, "Whether it's the roller that serves two functions or the IC technology that guides every pass, it's all about enabling contractors to work smarter, safer, and more effectively."


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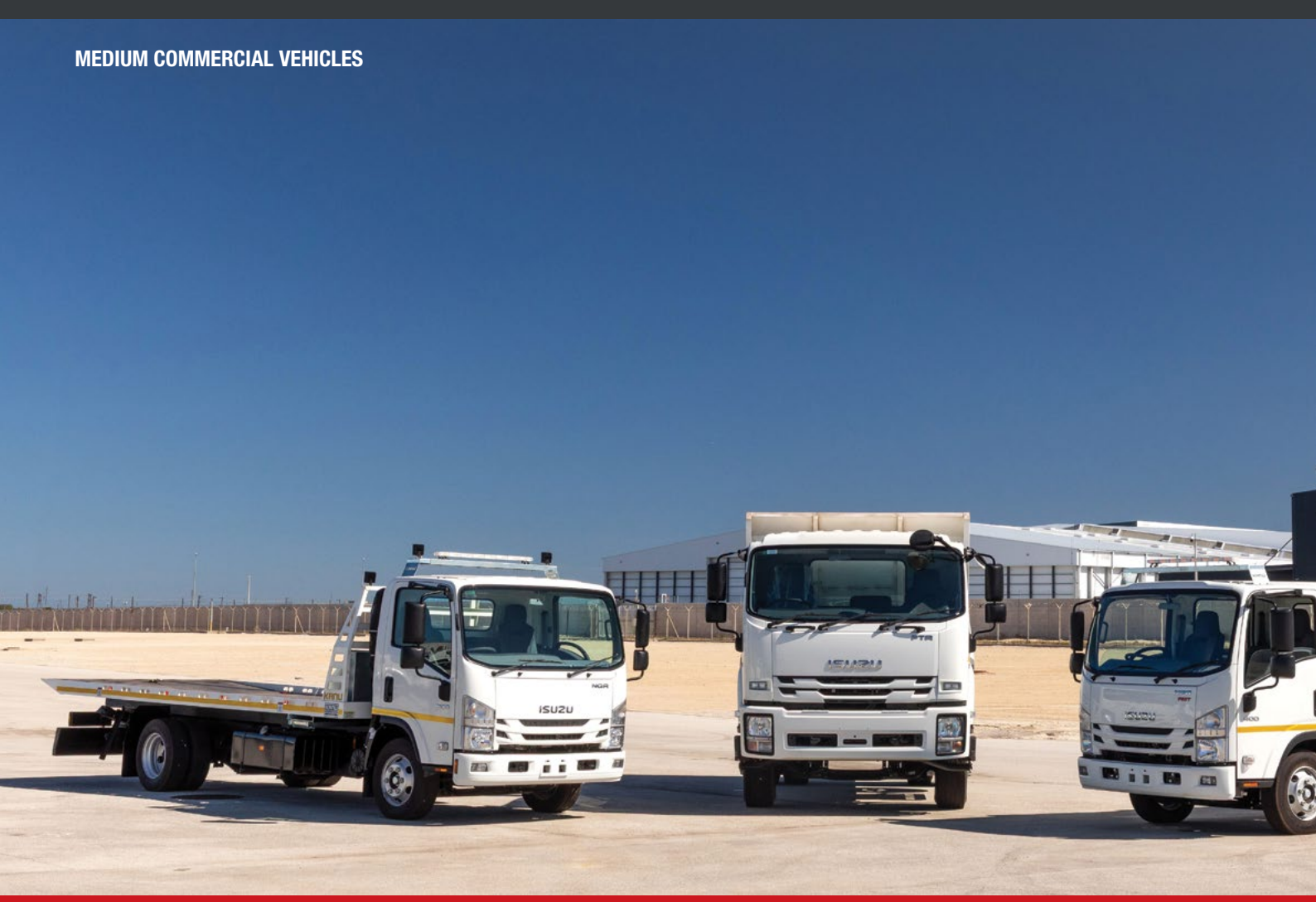


ISUZU'S SOLUTION-LED APPROACH IN SOUTH AFRICA'S MCV MARKET

Capital Equipment News' **Juanita Pienaar spoke with Mpho Nkhumeleni, Department Executive: CV Sales at Isuzu, about the brand's position in South Africa's medium commercial vehicle (MCV) market, the trends shaping demand, and how its flagship NPR 400 is helping operators drive productivity while keeping costs tightly controlled.**

Isuzu trucks make our customers money and do not cost them unnecessarily because of our solution-based trucking philosophy," he says. "Our proven reliability and lowest cost of ownership exceed our customers' expectations.

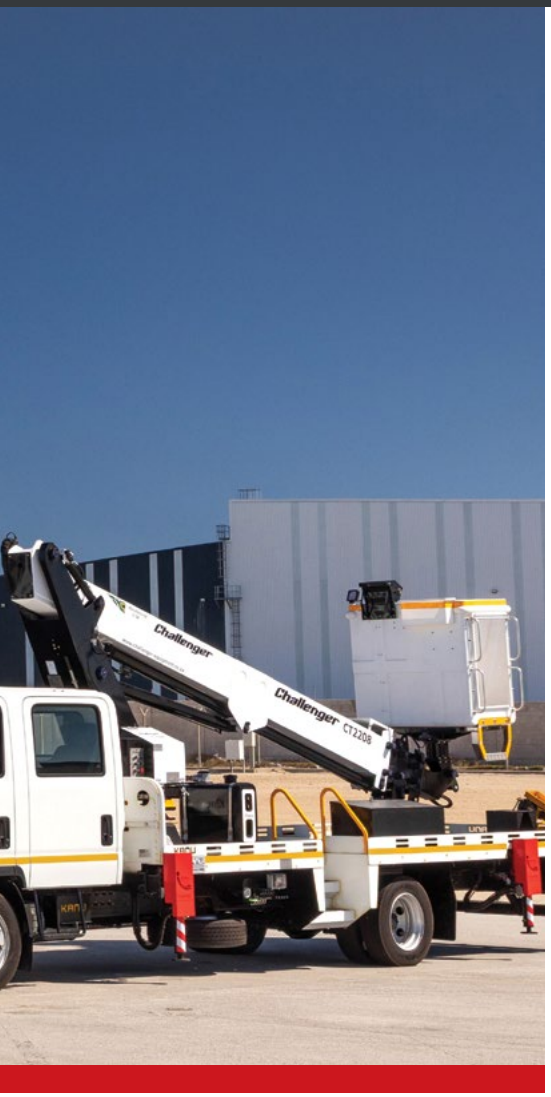
When margins are under pressure and uptime is non-negotiable, the MCV segment remains a critical enabler of commerce. From urban deliveries to regional logistics, these vehicles form the backbone of countless operations. Against this backdrop, Isuzu continues to position itself as a partner in profitability rather than simply a truck supplier.

A philosophy rooted in customer profitability

At the core of Isuzu's offering is what Nkhumeleni describes as a "solution-based trucking philosophy". This, he explains, goes beyond selling a chassis and engine combination.

"Isuzu trucks make our customers money and do not cost them unnecessarily because of our solution-based trucking philosophy," he says. "Our proven reliability and lowest cost of ownership exceed our customers' expectations."

In an environment where fleet operators scrutinise every cent per kilometre (CPK), the total cost of ownership has become a decisive factor. Fuel efficiency, durability, service



Isuzu trucks make our customers money and do not cost them unnecessarily because of our solution-based trucking philosophy.

Mpho Nkhumeleni, Department Executive: CV Sales at Isuzu.

TALKING POINT

Isuzu's breadth of product offerings also plays a strategic role in its market positioning. Isuzu offers the widest range of MCV models, including crewcab models, 4x4, EURO 5 and CNG.

intervals, and parts pricing all feed into the equation. According to Nkhumeleni, Isuzu's long-standing reputation for reliability remains one of its strongest competitive advantages.

The company's support structure further underpins this proposition. "We have an extensive dealer network with highly trained staff who ensure quick turnaround on service and repair & maintenance," he adds.

In practical terms, this network translates into reduced downtime - a crucial metric for operators whose revenues are directly linked to vehicle availability. Whether servicing a single owner-driver or a national fleet, rapid turnaround times can significantly influence overall operating efficiency.

Isuzu's breadth of product offerings also plays a strategic role in its market positioning. "Isuzu offers the widest range of MCV models, including crewcab models, 4x4, EURO 5 and CNG," says Nkhumeleni.

By catering to a diverse set of applications - from municipal services and construction to distribution and specialised upfits - the brand ensures that customers can source tailored solutions within a single portfolio.

Within Isuzu's MCV line-up, the NPR 400 has emerged as a key model for logistics, delivery, and local freight operations.

NPR 400 fits snuggly in the pay loads required by most of the operators in logistics, delivery, or local freight.

In the past year, ISUZU delivered over 200 turnkey trucks to Blue Chip and FML companies

Isuzu trucks make money for customers and do not cost them unnecessarily

> **Our customers require quick turnaround on upfitments in order to get trucks into operation as soon as possible. They want reliable trucks with low CPK.**

Speed and cost under the spotlight

Across industries, medium truck demand is increasingly shaped by speed-to-operation and operating economics. According to Nkhumeleni, customers are placing greater emphasis on how quickly a truck can be deployed once purchased.

"Our customers require quick turnaround on upfitments in order to get trucks into operation as soon as possible," he notes. "They want reliable trucks with low CPK."

The rise of e-commerce, just-in-time delivery models, and contract-based logistics has intensified pressure on operators to meet tight service-level agreements. Vehicles sitting idle during lengthy body-building processes or delayed fitments represent lost income opportunities.

At the same time, cost sensitivity remains high. Fuel volatility, maintenance expenses, and financing costs all contribute to the growing importance of low CPK. Reliability, therefore, is not simply a desirable trait, it is a financial imperative.

The convergence of these factors has sharpened demand for OEMs that can provide both speed and certainty: trucks that are ready to work quickly, backed by robust support structures.

The NPR 400: Right-sized for local freight

Within Isuzu's MCV line-up, the NPR 400 has emerged as a key model for logistics, delivery, and local freight operations. According to Nkhumeleni, its success lies in its alignment with real-world payload requirements.

"NPR 400 fits snuggly in the pay loads required by most of the operators in logistics, delivery, or local freight," he explains. "It is reliable and have best in class CPK."

This right-sizing is critical. Over-specifying a vehicle can inflate purchase and running costs, while under-specifying can compromise productivity and compliance. The NPR 400's balance of payload capacity and efficiency allows operators to optimise their routes without incurring unnecessary overheads.

For urban and peri-urban distribution, manoeuvrability and durability are equally important. Stop-start conditions, frequent loading cycles, and varying road surfaces demand a truck engineered for resilience. The NPR 400's design philosophy reflects these operational realities, supporting fleets that operate under constant time pressure.

Combined with Isuzu's aftersales support and warranty structures, the model becomes more than a standalone product, it forms part of a broader ecosystem focused on lifecycle value.

Driving uptime through innovation and service

Reducing downtime and increasing productivity are recurring themes in the MCV sector. For Isuzu, this focus extends beyond hardware to encompass service packages and digital monitoring tools.

"We offer 5-year Warranty, Service and Maintenance plans," says Nkhumeleni. Such extended coverage provides predictability in budgeting and reinforces customer confidence in long-term reliability.

In addition, technology is playing a growing role in fleet management. "All Isuzu trucks come with factory-fitted telematics to monitor trucks in real time," he adds.

Factory-fitted telematics enable operators to track vehicle location, monitor driver behaviour, and assess performance metrics in real time. This visibility supports proactive maintenance scheduling, improved route planning, and enhanced fuel management. For fleet managers, data-driven insights can translate directly into reduced operating costs and improved compliance.

By integrating telematics at factory level, Isuzu eliminates the need for aftermarket installations, ensuring seamless compatibility and reliability from day one.

Turnkey solutions and ready-to-work models

Perhaps one of the most significant trends

highlighted by Nkhumeleni is the growing demand for turnkey solutions. Rather than coordinating multiple suppliers for chassis, body-building, and fitment, customers increasingly prefer a single point of accountability.

"ISUZU offers turnkey projects where ISUZU handles the upfitments of the customer's solution and delivers completed trucks, ready to go into operations," he says.

This approach reduces complexity and accelerates deployment. With the OEM overseeing the upfitment process, customers benefit from streamlined communication, standardised quality control, and shortened lead times.

"In the past year, ISUZU delivered over 200 turnkey trucks to Blue Chip and FML companies," Nkhumeleni reveals.

Such volumes underscore the scale of demand for integrated solutions. For large corporates and fleet operators, turnkey delivery mitigates risk and ensures consistency across vehicles.

Complementing this offering is Isuzu's range of pre-bodied vehicles. "We have an extensive range of 'Ready to Work' trucks, where bodies are pre-fitted, and customers can put the trucks into operation immediately," he explains.

The "Ready to Work" concept aligns squarely with market demands for speed and efficiency. By eliminating the waiting period associated with custom body-building, operators can deploy assets immediately, accelerating revenue generation.

A partner in operational resilience

As South Africa's logistics and distribution sectors navigate economic pressures and evolving customer expectations, the role of dependable MCV partners becomes ever more critical. Reliability, low CPK, and rapid turnaround times are no longer competitive differentiators, they are baseline requirements.

Isuzu's emphasis on solution-based trucking, extended service plans, factory-fitted telematics, and turnkey project delivery reflects a strategic response to these realities. The NPR 400's positioning within the logistics and local freight space further demonstrates the brand's focus on right-sized, application-driven design.

For Nkhumeleni, the message is clear: "Isuzu trucks make our customers money and do not cost them unnecessarily."

By combining product breadth, technological integration, and an expansive dealer network, Isuzu continues to reinforce its standing in South Africa's medium commercial vehicle landscape - not merely as a supplier of trucks, but as a partner in operational resilience and profitability. ✪

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UD TRUCKS IS ENGINEERING RELIABILITY FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

Juanita Pienaar spoke with Filip Van den Heede, Managing Director of UD Trucks Southern Africa; Esaia Taunyane, Sales Director; and Sanjay Naipal, Aftermarket Director, to unpack how the brand is approaching uptime, safety, and long-term value in a challenging operating environment.

TALKING POINT

We often rely on cost – the cost of the truck, the cost of fuel, the cost of insurance, what is the maintenance going to cost me?

Sanjay Naipal, Aftermarket Director.

In Southern Africa's commercial transport sector, the true cost of ownership is rarely confined to a price tag on a purchase order. Vehicle downtime, security risks, fuel theft, long border delays, and uneven service coverage all exert a far greater influence on a fleet's profitability than many operators initially anticipate. For UD Trucks Southern Africa, these realities have shaped a strategy that places uptime, reliability, and network strength at the centre of its value proposition.

As Managing Director Filip Van den Heede explains, the company's

Dealers operate under a franchised model, with formats tailored to local market needs.

The company's approach is not about being focused on short-term cost considerations, but about ensuring that vehicles remain productive throughout their lifecycle.

One of the more visible technology developments is the introduction of advanced camera systems, designed not only for incident investigation but also for proactive safety.

The raised cab allows drivers to move more freely and change clothes comfortably, while efficient air-conditioning systems maintain a liveable environment in extreme temperatures

approach is not focused on short-term cost considerations, but about ensuring that vehicles remain productive throughout their lifecycle. That approach is echoed across sales and aftermarket, where technology, dealer coverage, and training are aligned to a single objective: keeping trucks on the road.

Rethinking cost through the lens of uptime

According to Aftermarket Director Sanjay Naipal, many purchasing decisions in the transport industry are still driven by visible, immediate costs. "We often rely on cost – the cost of the truck, the cost of fuel, the cost of insurance, what is the maintenance going to cost me?" he says. "And very few people consider the cost impact of downtime in their business."

That oversight can be costly. A truck standing idle in a workshop or on the roadside does not simply incur repair costs; it disrupts deliveries, affects customer relationships, and erodes margins. "People don't measure that," Naipal adds. "They don't assign it a Rand value. How much does the truck cost me

> **Sometimes getting a better quality of vehicle at a slightly higher initial cost, and the recovery you achieve over the five years that you own it, will far outweigh the immediate savings of your initial outlay.**

to run per day? What's my expected gross profit? And if it stands, what am I losing?"

From UD Trucks' perspective, a slightly higher upfront investment in a quality vehicle, backed by strong aftermarket support, can deliver a significantly better return over a typical five-year ownership cycle. "Sometimes getting a better quality of vehicle at a slightly higher initial cost, and the recovery you achieve over the five years that you own it, will far outweigh the immediate savings of your initial outlay," Naipal says.

Technology shaped by regional realities

Southern Africa presents a unique operating environment, particularly regarding vehicle security.

UD Trucks offers a comprehensive telematics platform developed in Japan that monitors vehicle location, driving behaviour, and route adherence. Noticing that customers were still investing in separate recovery systems, UD Trucks partnered with a local provider to integrate recovery functionality under its own brand. "The customer doesn't have to pay two subscriptions," Naipal explains. "Everything is included with the purchase of the vehicle."

On heavy-duty trucks, five years of UD Connected Services (telematics) are included, giving operators time to learn the system and evaluate its benefits.

Fuel theft, a common problem, is mitigated through a simple but effective mechanical solution: a floating ball valve inside the fuel tank. This prevents siphoning while still allowing normal refuelling. "You're can't siphon past that ball valve," Naipal explains. "But when refuelling, the diesel nozzle presses the ball down, and the tank fills as normal".

Cameras, data, and accident prevention

One of the more visible technology developments is the introduction of advanced camera systems, designed not only for incident investigation but also for proactive safety. These systems monitor driver behaviour, including eye movement and distraction. "It measures the driver's eye," says Naipal. "A phone against the ear – it can detect that. The algorithms identify when the driver is distracted or using a phone.

The system detects fatigue or inattention, enabling fleet managers to intervene before an incident occurs.

In the event of an accident, the benefits are equally clear. "Otherwise, it just becomes a case of 'you said, she said," Naipal remarks. With heavy vehicles often blamed by default, camera footage provides objective evidence that can be crucial for insurance and liability assessments.

Designing trucks as living spaces

Long-haul transport in Southern Africa often involves extended periods away from home, with drivers spending days at border posts or on the road. UD Trucks' high-roof cabs are designed with this

reality in mind.

Drawing on personal experience, Naipal explains the rationale behind the design. "My father was a truck driver," he says. "He lived in the truck five or six days a week. That became his home - he cooked, he got changed in there."

The raised cab allows drivers to move more freely and change clothes comfortably, while efficient air-conditioning systems maintain a liveable environment in extreme temperatures. Optional accessories such as refrigerators, microwaves, and electric jugs further enhance comfort. "The ports are there," Naipal adds, "and you can charge your electric devices and similar equipment."

The space is also designed to accommodate operational demands. "Oftentimes you have two drivers assigned to a vehicle – one sleeps while the other drives – meaning the truck operates 24 hours a day," he explains. Alternatively, an assistant may travel with the driver to help with loading and securing cargo. "So, the cab effectively needs to support two people living in that confined space. The larger the cab, the more efficient it becomes."

A network built for reach and flexibility

Uptime depends as much on support infrastructure as on vehicle design. UD Trucks has invested significantly in its dealer network, which spans both urban centres and remote regions. "We are 39 dealers in South Africa," says Naipal. "And 15 importers north of the border - 55 in total across sub-Saharan Africa."

Accessibility is a key differentiator. "If you go to Queenstown, there's a UD dealer there. If you go to Port Shepstone, there's a UD dealer there," he explains. The network is designed to evolve with market demand, particularly in sectors such as mining. "With mining activity increasing in areas like Kathu, we see the need to open a dealership in new regions," Naipal notes. "We have to be flexible."

Dealers operate under a franchised model, with formats tailored to local market needs. Some are full 3S dealerships offering sales, parts, and service, while others are 2S operations focused solely on parts and service in rural areas. Satellite workshops may also be introduced as demand grows, with potential to develop into standalone dealerships once volumes justify the investment.

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Parts availability and data-driven stocking

Keeping trucks moving requires rapid access to the right parts in the right locations. UD Trucks addresses this through its Logistics Partner Agreement (LPA) system, which has been in place for around a decade. The system recognises that no two dealerships operate in identical markets.

"A dealer in Boksburg will handle a lot of distribution vehicles," Naipal explains, while Durban dealers see higher volumes of long-haul, heavy-duty trucks linked to port activity. "The parts you stock have got to correspond- you can't stock Durban the same way as you stock Johannesburg."

To support its dealers, UD Trucks provides tailored stocking systems and even offers a buy-back guarantee on excess inventory. "If you're overstocked, we'll buy it back," says Naipal. "So, there's no skin off their backs." This approach reduces risk for dealers while ensuring customers benefit from high parts availability.

Training as an investment, not a cost

Technical competence across the dealer network is another pillar of uptime. Training programmes bring technicians from across the country to central facilities, an exercise that involves high logistical costs. "We fly them up from all over the country," Naipal explains.

Rather than avoiding these costs, UD Trucks has structured training contributions that allow dealers to access continuous development throughout the year. "We make it possible for the dealer network to give the customer trained technicians, genuine parts, and quality to keep the vehicle on the road," Naipal says.

Ultimately, uptime is not the result of a single initiative. "It's not just a concept about having a call centre or a building," he concludes. "It's having the call centre, the building, the process, the people, the training - it all comes together. There's no one thing that I would say gives you uptime. It all comes together."

When margins are tight and operational risks are high, UD Trucks Southern Africa's emphasis on holistic value rather than headline price offers a compelling proposition. By aligning technology, vehicle design, and an extensive support network around the principle of uptime, the company is positioning itself not simply as a truck supplier but as a long-term partner in its customers' businesses.

STRATEGIC PLANT HIRE IN A SHIFTING ECONOMY

Capital Equipment News' **Juanita Pienaar spoke with Jordan Vevers, National Marketing Manager at Atlas Plant Hire, about current market conditions, demand trends, fleet strategy, and the evolving role of plant hire in supporting operational efficiency across South Africa's key sectors.**

In an economic climate that remains constrained and cost-sensitive, the plant hire industry continues to show notable resilience. Rather than contracting under pressure, the sector is adapting - responding to structural shifts in procurement behaviour and rising expectations around reliability, service, and performance assurance.

A resilient market with shifting priorities

Vevers describes the current market outlook as stable but strategically evolving.

"The plant hire industry continues to demonstrate structural resilience, even within a constrained economic environment," he explains. "Market behaviour increasingly reflects a shift from asset ownership to asset access, as organisations prioritise capital efficiency, operational flexibility, and risk mitigation."

Companies are committed to launching new products and connecting with buyers and partners, despite any broader economic or operational uncertainties

Charlene Hefer, Portfolio Director at Montgomery Group Africa.

TALKING POINT

This transition away from ownership is not merely cyclical, it reflects a broader change in how businesses approach capital allocation. Rather than tying up resources in depreciating assets,

companies are seeking greater financial agility. Rental, in this context, becomes a strategic lever rather than a short-term cost-saving measure.

"We are observing sustained demand from infrastructure programmes, mining operations, energy-related projects, and industrial activities," says Vevers. "Importantly, procurement decisions are no longer driven purely by cost considerations - reliability, uptime assurance, and service capability have become decisive factors."

In practical terms, this means that rental partners are increasingly evaluated on their ability to deliver consistent equipment performance and dependable technical support, not simply competitive pricing. "This evolution favours rental partners capable of delivering consistent equipment performance and dependable technical support," he adds.

Demand patterns within the rental sector closely mirror the performance requirements of South Africa's core industries. Where productivity and continuity are non-negotiable, rental demand intensifies.

Equipment demand reflects productivity pressure

Demand patterns within the rental sector closely mirror the performance requirements of South Africa's core industries. Where productivity and continuity are non-negotiable, rental demand intensifies.

"Demand trends largely mirror sectors where productivity and continuity of operations are critical," says Vevers.

Portable energy and air solutions remain especially significant. According to Vevers, key categories currently experiencing strong demand include "portable diesel compressors (standard and high-pressure), power generation equipment, dewatering and pumping solutions, compaction equipment, pneumatic tools and associated accessories".

High-pressure air solutions, in particular, have become strategically important. "High-pressure air solutions play an essential role in specialised applications such as drilling and mining, where performance reliability directly influences project outcomes," he explains.

The ongoing challenges around energy security have further strengthened demand for temporary and supplementary power solutions. "Energy solutions continue to see elevated demand as businesses navigate power security challenges," Vevers notes. In an environment where power interruptions can disrupt operations and erode margins, rental power solutions offer both continuity and flexibility.

From procurement alternative to operational enabler

Perhaps the most significant shift in the plant hire landscape is the repositioning of rental as a strategic operational enabler rather than a secondary procurement option.

"Plant hire serves as a strategic enabler of operational efficiency rather than merely a procurement alternative," Vevers says.

By removing the capital burden associated with asset ownership, organisations are able to preserve liquidity while maintaining access to application-specific equipment. "By removing the capital burden of ownership, organisations preserve financial agility while gaining access to modern, application-specific equipment," he explains.

The model also transfers key responsibilities away from the customer. "Equally significant is the transfer of maintenance, reliability, and lifecycle management responsibilities to the rental provider," Vevers adds.

This shift reduces risk exposure. "This model reduces operational risk, improves uptime continuity, and supports project scalability," he says. In industries where downtime translates directly into financial loss, this reliability becomes critical.

"The outcome is a more predictable cost structure and enhanced productivity, particularly in project-driven industries where delays carry substantial financial consequences."

In other words, plant hire is no longer simply about filling equipment gaps. It is about ensuring continuity, safeguarding timelines, and supporting scalable

operations without burdening balance sheets.

Fleet optimisation as a strategic discipline

For a rental provider, fleet performance is not simply an operational concern - it underpins brand credibility and long-term client relationships.

"Fleet performance is fundamental to service credibility," Vevers states.

At Atlas Plant Hire, this philosophy translates into what he describes as "a disciplined asset management philosophy centred on preventive maintenance, lifecycle monitoring, and quality assurance controls".

Structured servicing regimes form the backbone of this approach. "This includes structured servicing regimes, inspection protocols, calibration governance, and continuous reinvestment into fleet modernisation," he explains.

Reliability is treated as a strategic imperative rather than a reactive function. "Equipment reliability is treated as a strategic imperative, as downtime within customer operations can have cascading operational and financial impacts," says Vevers.

The aim is clear: "Our objective is to consistently deliver equipment readiness, safety compliance, and performance assurance."

In practice, this means anticipating issues before they arise, maintaining strict inspection and servicing standards, and ensuring that equipment deployed to site is ready to perform under demanding conditions.

Digital integration shaping competitive edge

Technology is also reshaping how rental businesses operate and compete. While plant hire remains inherently operational, data-driven management practices are becoming increasingly influential.

"Digital integration is steadily redefining operational models within the rental sector," says Vevers.

Enhanced visibility over assets and utilisation rates allows for smarter decision-making. "Enhanced asset visibility, utilisation tracking, and maintenance planning tools contribute to improved fleet efficiency and faster decision-making," he explains.

Beyond internal efficiency, digital tools also strengthen customer engagement. "Technology also strengthens customer engagement by enabling more responsive communication, proactive service interventions, and improved turnaround times." Although the industry remains grounded in physical assets and field operations, the strategic application of data is emerging as a differentiator. "While the sector remains operationally driven, data-supported management practices are increasingly shaping competitive differentiation," Vevers notes.

For customers, this translates into quicker responses, better equipment availability, and greater transparency.

Partnerships built on reliability and alignment

When discussing successful hire partnerships, Vevers returns consistently to themes of reliability and alignment.

"Successful partnerships are typically characterised by reliability, responsiveness, and alignment with customer operational priorities," he says.

Across construction, mining, and industrial environments, value creation is rarely dramatic. It is often incremental and consistency-based. "Value creation frequently stems from accurate equipment specification, consistent uptime delivery, and the ability to respond rapidly to changing site conditions."

This responsiveness is particularly important in dynamic project environments, where scope adjustments and unexpected operational challenges are commonplace.

"Long-term relationships tend to develop where rental providers operate as operational partners rather than transactional suppliers," Vevers explains. "Contributing to continuity, efficiency, and risk reduction within client projects."

The distinction between transactional supplier and operational partner is critical. In the former model, interaction is limited to equipment delivery and collection. In the latter, collaboration extends to planning, specification, maintenance strategy, and problem-solving.

Plant hire as a strategic foundation

Despite broader economic pressures, the plant hire sector appears positioned for continued relevance - if not expansion. As businesses prioritise flexibility, preserve capital, and seek risk mitigation, rental models align naturally with these strategic objectives.

The industry's resilience lies not only in steady demand from infrastructure, mining, and energy sectors but in its ability to adapt to changing procurement philosophies. Reliability, uptime assurance, lifecycle management, and digital integration are no longer peripheral considerations, they are central to competitive positioning.

As Vevers summarises throughout the discussion, the future of plant hire rests on disciplined asset management, performance assurance, and partnership-based service delivery.

In a market where continuity defines success and downtime carries measurable cost, plant hire is increasingly recognised not as an optional convenience, but as a strategic foundation for operational performance. ✪

Demand patterns within the rental sector closely mirror the performance requirements of South Africa's core industries. Where productivity and continuity are non-negotiable, rental demand intensifies.

ESG IN AFRICA MUST BE BUILT IN – NOT ADDED ON

At Mining Indaba 2026, the conversation shifted from ambition to accountability. The question was direct: can mining scale up production in Africa while moving towards zero waste and lower emissions? For Michelin, the answer lies in practical decisions made every day on site.

Speaking during the "Mining Without Compromise" panel at the Technology & Innovation Hub, Amaury Vadon, VP Sales Africa, India & Middle East and Commercial Director for Sub-Saharan Africa at Michelin, made a clear point:

- "ESG only lasts if it strengthens operations. If it competes with productivity or reliability, it will not survive."
- Many of the technologies needed to reduce emissions already exist. Clean energy solutions are expanding. Electrified equipment is advancing. Digital tools are improving visibility underground and on haul roads.
- The challenge is not technology alone. It is integration.

In Africa in particular, reliability, uptime and delivery timelines often drive decision-making. When trade-offs arise, production continuity usually comes first.

That means sustainability must lower risk, improve productivity or reduce lifecycle cost. Otherwise, it becomes an add-on.

During the discussion, Vadon drew attention to a component that rarely headlines ESG debates: TYRES. In surface mining, fuel is one of the largest operating costs. Tyres follow closely behind. Yet tyres also play a direct role in how much fuel a truck consumes. When a loaded haul truck moves across a site, its tyres flex and generate heat. That heat represents lost energy. The more energy lost, the more fuel burned.

Energy-efficient tyre design reduces that loss. Lower rolling resistance allows more of the truck's power to move material forward instead of being absorbed into heat.

"Small efficiency gains per truck can translate into meaningful reductions across a fleet," said Vadon.

Michelin's approach combines tyre design with predictive monitoring, pressure management and haul road optimisation. The goal is simple: extend tyre life, reduce downtime and lower fuel consumption at the same time.

For operators, that links sustainability directly to performance.

As mines grow, so too do stockpiles of end-of-life tyres. In many regions, these piles become a visible symbol of unmanaged waste.

At Mining Indaba, Vadon addressed how Michelin is approaching end-of-life tyre management in South Africa. Through reverse logistics and pyrolysis processing, used tyres are converted into recovered materials such as steel and carbon-based products, which are then reintroduced into local industrial value chains.

"Circularity must work in the real world," said Vadon. "It must function within local infrastructure and deliver value locally. Otherwise, it remains a theory."

For African mining companies facing increasing scrutiny from global investors and customers, waste management is becoming as important as emissions reduction.

One of the strongest themes from the panel was resilience.

Commodity cycles fluctuate. Capital tightens. ESG initiatives that sit outside core operations are often the first to be paused.

By contrast, solutions that improve safety, reduce downtime and lower fuel use tend to remain.

Michelin describes this approach as "Better Mining" - working alongside operators to embed safety, efficiency and sustainability into daily operations rather than layering them on top.

"Mining without compromise is possible," Vadon concluded. "But it requires discipline. Sustainability must be designed into the system from the start."

As demand for critical minerals accelerates, African mines are under pressure to deliver both growth and responsibility. The message from Mining Indaba was clear: the future will belong to operators who can do both - and prove it. ✪

Circularity must work in the real world," said Vadon. "It must function within local infrastructure and deliver value locally. Otherwise, it remains a theory.

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