

THE MOBILE FILM VAN AS A COMMUNICATIONS MEDIUM IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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This paper describes an elementary evaluation of a mobile film van as a communications medium in the environmental education programme of the National Parks Board of Bophuthatswana.

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of 1981, the South African Breweries donated a combi to the Communications Section of the Pilanesberg National Park. The vehicle was equipped as a mobile film van by the Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA). It is completely self-contained with its own generator, 16mm projector, slide-tape projector, screen, public address system and audio-visual materials (films, slide-tape programmes). The film van is operated by a Communications Officer of the National Parks Board of Bophuthatswana and travels throughout the seven regions comprising Bophuthatswana.

Initially the film van played a role only in the formalized environmental education programme of the Communications Section. It was soon realized that the film van also had a valuable role to play in both the public relations and extension activities of the Communications Section, particularly as it operates throughout Bophuthatswana. Consequently these functions were incorporated into the operation of the film van. This paper considers the role of the film van in the formalized environmental education programme of the Communications Section.

MODUS OPERANDI

Through the medium of talks, slide- and filmshows, the Communications Officer aims to contribute towards an awareness amongst teachers and their pupils of the importance of conservation. He also aims to promote other aspects of the environmental education programme by advertising the educational courses and facilities at Pilanesberg, and servicing the network of conservation clubs which exist throughout the country.

Filmshows and talks are at present generally confined to after-school hours and are done by prior arrangement with the school principal concerned. The programme normally covers the following aspects:

1. A brief informal explanation on why the film van is visiting the school and what its role is relative to the rest of the National Parks Board.
2. A second short talk on background information on the National Parks Board.
3. An introduction to the films to be shown.
4. Films relating to conservation/environmental education issues.
5. An introduction to the Lengau Conservation Clubs (a slide-tape presentation).
6. The provision of information on the facilities and educational courses offered by the National

Parks Board.

7. Audience participation in the form of questions and answers.

All school principals are asked to evaluate the afternoon's programme by completing a 'Principal's opinion survey' form (see Appendix A).

RESULTS

Results showing the number of schools visited and pupils to whom talks and films were presented, are given in Table 1 and shown graphically in Figure 1.

Other results from the opinion survey are as follows:

- *Do you think that the filmshows were worthwhile?*
YES 99% NO 1%
- *Do you think that the educational content of the films justifies them being shown during school hours?*
YES 94% NO 6%
- *Have pupils from your school visited the Pilanesberg National Park yet? If not, do you intend bringing them?*
On being visited by the film van the majority of schools (86%) indicated that at that stage they had not yet visited Pilanesberg; 338 of the principals (99%) intended bringing their pupils.
- *What is the biggest obstacle which makes it difficult for your school to visit Pilanesberg?*
Only two obstacles were identified. They were:
 - 1.. Lack of funds: 158 principals (46,4%)
 2. Lack of information: 26 principals (7,6%).
- *Comments or special requests.*
These were categorized as follows:
 1. More regular filmshows - requested by 86 principals (25,2%).
 2. Films to be narrated in Setswana - requested by 16 principals (4,7%).
 3. Assistance with transport - requested by 15 principals (4,4%).
 4. Accommodation at Pilanesberg - requested by 9 principals (2,6%).

DISCUSSION

In the opinion of the school principals, who constitute part of the target audience, the visits by the film van are almost unanimously worthwhile. The importance of the film van as a communications medium between the National Parks Board and school children and teachers throughout Bophuthatswana is further emphasized by the fact that the majority of schools sampled had not yet visited Pilanesberg National Park, and despite positive intentions, many appear constrained by finances. This means that in many instances the mobile film van would provide the major, if not only, medium for promoting the Board's environmental education programme.

TABLE 1 Number of schools and pupils visited per month for the period January 1982-December 1985.

MONTH	SCHOOLS				PUPILS			
	1982	1983	1984	1985	1982	1983	1984	1985
JANUARY	1	17	0	9	306	628	0	1 919
FEBRUARY	4	5	15	15	1 320	1 075	5 015	7 103
MARCH	17	6	16	1	7 625	1 422	7 425	464
APRIL	13	6	16	0	4 563	4 391	4 594	0
MAY	8	12	7	12	3 719	5 072	1 821	3 168
JUNE	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	715
JULY	24	5	7	7	5 336	1 818	3 225	2 164
AUGUST	17	10	13	2	5 931	4 224	3 927	471
SEPTEMBER	26	14	4	0	10 421	4 198	1 019	0
OCTOBER	29	0	0	0	6 759	0	0	0
NOVEMBER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DECEMBER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	139	75	78	49	45 980	22 828	27 026	16 004

Total schools: 341

Total pupils: 111 838

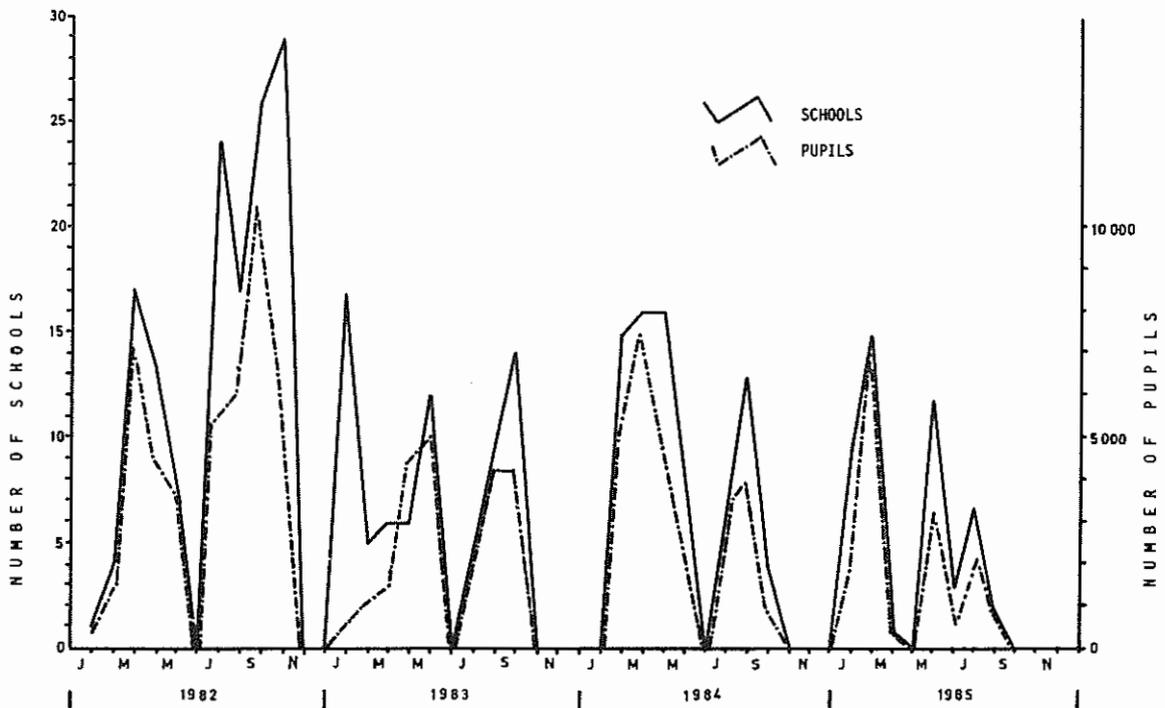


FIGURE 1 Number of schools and pupils visited on a monthly basis January 1982-December 1985.

There are just over 1 000 schools in Bophuthatswana with a total enrolment of approximately 500 000. The data in Figure 1 thus indicates that a significant proportion of schools and pupils in Bophuthatswana are being reached by means of the film van. The diminishing number of schools visited over the period 1982-1985 is attributed to other demands being made on the film van (i.e. public relations and extension activities).

The opinion survey was designed in such a way that it could be used as a motivation to improve the effectiveness of the film van. For example, the fact that 94% of school principals agreed that the educational content of the films justifies their being screened during school hours was used as a motivation for extending the hours of operation of the film van, thereby increasing its cost-effectiveness. Similarly the results presented above were used as a motivation to extend the film van network by an additional two vehicles, one of which was generously donated by United Breweries and the other was obtained with assistance from Avis. These additional vehicles will also increase the cost-effectiveness of the operation since they will be stationed in other regions of Bophuthatswana, thus obviating the necessity of travelling the great distances between regions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, the authors would like to thank the South African Breweries and the Employment Bureau of Africa for providing the initial film van. United Breweries and Avis are likewise thanked for their generous contributions. Furthermore the programme would not have been able to operate effectively without the support of the Bophuthatswana Department of Education. The Secretary for Education, all Circuit Inspectors and School Principals are thanked for their kind co-operation and assistance.

APPENDIX A

OPINION SURVEY: SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

NAME OF SCHOOL:

CIRCUIT:

DATE OF FILMS:

NO. OF PUPILS VIEWING FILMS:

GRADE 1	STD 5
GRADE 2	STD 6
STD 1	STD 7
STD 2	STD 8
STD 3	STD 9
STD 4	STD 10

DO YOU THINK THAT THE FILMSHWS WERE WORTHWHILE?

YES NO

DO YOU THINK THAT THE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT OF THE FILMS JUSTIFIES THEM BEING SHOWN DURING SCHOOL HOURS?

YES NO

HAVE PUPILS FROM YOUR SCHOOL VISITED THE PILANESBERG NATIONAL PARK YET?

YES NO

IF NOT, DO YOU INTEND BRINGING THEM?

YES NO

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE WHICH MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR YOUR SCHOOL TO VISIT PILANESBERG?

.....

COMMENTS OR SPECIAL REQUESTS:

.....

.....
 SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL

SCHOOL STAMP

WHAT IS NATURE ?

What is Nature?

Here I am, sitting on a dried dead log,
 Looking up at the horizon and the blue sky,
 Listening to a complexity of different sounds.
 Nature here and there surrounding me.

Then I ask myself a question:
 What is underneath the log?
 Lifting it up, there came
 Ants, millipedes, scorpions and others.
 So, moving it means destruction.
 With a sense of appreciation I replaced it.

I then picked up a fallen leaf.
 Walking round and around
 Watching, listening ...
 And there flocked the singing birds,
 Bees buzzing and sucking pollen grain,
 Insects scurrying.

Piet Mkhathwa