

Trail of African bling exposes 50,000- year-old social media

Scientists have actually revealed the world's earliest social media, a web of connections that grew 50,000 years back and gone for countless miles throughout Africa.

But unlike its contemporary electronic equivalent, this ancient web of social bonds utilized a much more prosaic medium. It depended on the sharing and trading of beads made from ostrich eggshells– among mankind's earliest types of individual accessory.

The research study by researchers in Germany included the research study of more than 1,500 of these beads, which were collected at more than 30 websites throughout southern and east Africa. Mindful analysis recommends that individuals who made the beads– which are still made and used by hunter-gatherers in Africa today– were exchanging them over large ranges, assisting to share symbolic messages and to enhance alliances.

"It's like following a path of breadcrumbs," stated the research study's lead author, Jennifer Miller, of limit Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in the city of Jena. "The beads are ideas, spread throughout time and area, simply waiting to be seen."

The research study, released in *Nature* recently, compared beads discovered at 31 websites in southern and eastern Africa, covering more than 1,800 miles. By comparing the outdoors size of a shell, the size of the holes inside them, and the density of the walls of the eggshell, the researchers discovered that about 50,000 years ago individuals in eastern and southern Africa began to make almost similar beads out of ostrich eggs.

Map: south and east Africa

Yet these groups and neighborhoods were separated by large ranges, which recommends the presence of a long-distance social media that extended over countless miles, linking individuals in remote areas. "The outcome is unexpected, however the pattern is clear," stated the research study's other author, Yiming Wang, who is likewise based at limit Planck.

Ostrich eggshell beads are a few of the earliest kinds of self-decoration discovered in the historical record, although they were not the very first to be embraced by *Homo sapiens*. Researchers think males and females began daubing themselves with the reddish pigment ochre about 200,000 years earlier, prior to

beginning to use beads 75,000 years back.

However, the accessory market truly removed about 50,000 years earlier in Africa, with the manufacture of the very first ostrich eggshell beads– the earliest standardised type of jewellery understood to archaeology. This was the world’s very first “bling” and its usage represents among mankind’s longest-running cultural customs, including the expression of identity and relationships. As Miller put it: “These small beads have the power to expose huge stories about our past.”



Traditional beads made from ostrich egg shell, with holes hand drilled one at a time.
Photograph: Majority World/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

Or as archaeologist Michelle Langley of Griffith University in Queensland, Australia, has actually stated: “Bling is important: it informs us something about the individual who used it. More bling in the historical record suggests more interactions. Traded bling informs us who was speaking with whom.”

The critical point about ostrich eggshell jewellery is, rather of counting on a product’s natural size or shape, human beings started to form the shells straight and produce chances for variations in design to establish. The resulting patterns provided the scientists a path through which they might trace cultural connections, though it is uncertain if the ostrich eggshell beads studied by Miller and Wang were traded in between groups or if it was the understanding of how to make them that was exchanged. Many proof indicate the latter.

The world’s very first social media did not last. About 33,000 years back, the pattern of bead-wearing quickly altered: they vanished from southern Africa while continuing in east Africa. Miller and Wang recommend weather modifications lay behind this, bringing an end to the world’s earliest social media—albeit after 17,000 years.

Source: [Trail of African bling exposes 50,000- year-old social media network](#)