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## **Women and the Art of Speaking with the Beads: The Traditional 'Zulu Love Letter'**

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**ABSTRACT** Beads form an integral part of the Zulu traditional regalia as they are used among the Zulu people of both genders to portray their status and social relationships. From the Zulu perspective, a skill of speaking with the beads flows from young women who specialize in designing the popular 'Zulu love letter' to communicate their romantic messages to their male recipients. A beaded-message adds a loving seasoning to the meaning of a non-verbal language of beads for eloquent communication, especially during romantic relationships. In the published academic literature, there is a significant research gap concerning the value and the function of this indigenous form of communication. This paper attempts to fill the gap by conducting firsthand interviews with local women in KwaZulu-Natal to examine and interpret the indigenous bead puzzle 'written' by women to outshine men through color coding.