

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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FRONT & FORWARD The Latest Buzz on...

## Phone Culture

### LISA KATAYAMA

Tokyo Mango blog  
Japanese Culture Writer



As good as real? In Japan, a cultural trendsetter, virtual boyfriends and girlfriends are all the rage, says Ms. Katayama, who writes a blog called Tokyo Mango. Sites like “Web Kare” (“Web Boyfriend,” at [Web-Kare.jp](http://Web-Kare.jp)) let users choose animated characters that live on their computers and cellphones; when prompted, they’ll tell you how great you look. Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., a sponsor of the Tokyo Marathon, created a virtual race site ([Amino-Marathon.jp/tokyo2009/sp](http://Amino-Marathon.jp/tokyo2009/sp)) where people who didn’t register for the real race can watch their character run. “Things you can’t do in the real world, you can do vicariously through avatars,” says Ms. Katayama.

LENS ON THE WORLD: NTT DoCoMo Inc., the


Japanese mobile operator, plans to roll out a next-generation cellphone network next year, with faster Net access, improved multimedia—and phones with 3-D virtual lenses. A user holds up her phone to, say, a pretagged tourist site or sign, and information will pop up on the screen about the location’s history or nearby restaurants.


**REMOTE CONTROL:** DoCoMo is also testing wearable mobile devices that give remote control a whole new meaning. One is a headset that would enable users to download music or a coupon to the device just by looking at a barcode. Eventually such devices may do more. Automotive supplier Denso Corp. has developed a ring that lets users open and close a car by pressing their thumb and a finger against each other, allowing a low-grade electrical current to send a radio signal.

## Fitness Equipment

### KEVIN FOLEY

International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association  
Web Content Coordinator





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**SWEAT STATS:** Keeping track of your indoor workouts can be a lot easier, thanks to new wireless gear, says Mr. Foley, who follows fitness technologies for the trade group. This month, [Garmin Ltd.](#) plans to begin selling a fitness watch, the \$129 FR60, that communicates directly with compatible equipment, such as rowing machines, bikes and treadmills. The watch gathers data about heart rate, calories burned and (when used with an optional foot device) speed and distance, which the user can upload wirelessly to [Connect.Garmin.com](#), where it can be analyzed and combined with statistics about outdoor workouts.

**GREEN MACHINES:** Fitness-equipment manufacturers are making their products more energy efficient. This summer, treadmill maker Woodway USA, of Waukesha, Wis., plans to begin shipping an \$8,500 treadmill, the EcoMill, that has no motor and requires no power; the exerciser generates electricity by walking or running, recharging a battery that powers the treadmill and its displays. A \$5,500 model, the Speedboard, has a smaller display with less information.

**ENGAGING EXERCISING:** In a quest to make fitness more enjoyable, companies are rolling out new entertainment offerings. New in-machine displays from Netpulse Inc. offer on-demand videos, television shows, news and email access. Users can log on through their Yahoo, Gmail or Facebook accounts; soon they will be able to share and track their Netpulse workouts on Facebook and challenge their friends to races.

## MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

### ARUN RAVI

Frost & Sullivan

Health-Care, Life-Sciences Consultant



**HEALTH FROM HOME:** With overcrowded hospitals and millions of uninsured patients in the U.S., the next wave of health-care innovation will involve technologies that make it easier to treat or monitor patients from their homes, according to Mr. Ravi, a consultant specializing in health care at Frost & Sullivan, a research and consulting firm. Berlin-based Biotronik GmbH has pioneered a home-monitoring system that wirelessly connects to implantable devices like pacemakers and defibrillators and signals a patient's status back to a physician.

**TELLTALE HEART:** In a similar vein, patients with heart problems can signal their doctors if they are feeling light-headed or have other symptoms by using a newly FDA-approved cardiac monitoring system from Transoma Medical Inc., based in St. Paul, Minn. The device, which is implanted to wirelessly monitor the electrical activity of the heart, became available June 1.

**EMR AVATAR:** The Obama administration is urging the adoption of electronic medical records, but [International Business Machines Corp.](#) is partnering with a Swiss company, Nhumi Technologies GmbH, to take electronic medical records one step further. They're working on visualization software, complete with an avatar patient, to help clinicians see a patient's available health information as it corresponds to various parts of the body, making treatment more efficient. A pilot project at a Denmark hospital was just completed, and the software is in beta release.

### Companies within this Article

International Business Machines Corp.(IBM)	101.65	-0.08	4:00p.m.
Garmin Ltd.(GRMN)	23.32	-0.40	4:00p.m.
NTT DoCoMo Inc. ADS(DCM)	14.70	+0.27	4:01p.m.

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