

# Alcatel Rolls Out Spring Line of Fashion Phones

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Alcatel, a French/Chinese phone maker is making a big splash in the U.S. this year, with twenty – yes, twenty – phones for the U.S. market. The look? Chic and stylish.

I love the new guys. The weird guys. The Frenchmen with gold silk Louis Vuitton scarves and a runway full of fashion models, who think they can break through here in the U.S. with new ideas.

That's Gregory Fermanian from Alcatel, a French/Chinese phone maker who's making a big splash in the U.S. this year, with twenty – yes, twenty – phones for the U.S. market.

Alcatel's theme is "chic and stylish," but inexpensive, Fermanian said. The company uses soft-touch plastics, a leather-like finish, and design touches like "dots of liquid metal" on the outside of a flip phone, or a keypad that looks like it's been distressed with water drops. They showed some phones with florid, floral covers.

These design elements enhance basic, but reasonably featured phones. Their range is huge; it goes from the simplest voice phones up to mid-range music phones with 1.3-megapixel cameras, 3.5-mm headphone jacks, dedicated music keys and support for 1-Gbyte TransFlash cards holding music.

Alcatel is also extending a deal they have with Elle magazine in Europe to sell Elle-branded phones in the US. The "Elle GlamPhone" is a

moderately-sized slider phone in four colors: white, pink, yellow-green and purple. It has stereo Bluetooth for its MP3 player and a 1.3 megapixel camera.

Ultimately, customers are going to buy Alcatel phones if they like the look and the price. And there's nothing wrong with that: cell phones are as much expressions of fashion and personal style as they are of technology. It may be easy to make fun of French style (such as saying that a powder-blue phone is "a more male look," as Fermanian did), but the country's history with fashion is unimpeachable – so why not extend that history into fashion phones?

"As we are new in the market, we want to show we have plenty of possibilities," Fermanian said.

Alcatel is working on getting all of their GSM phones approved by Cingular, and their CDMA phones approved by smaller regional carriers, Fermanian said. With luck, customers should see their phones start appearing in local, independent cell phone shops by May.

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