

Bling bling with your ring ring: Dekoden craze sees cell phones get a touch of glitz, glamour

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Cell phone owners are ringing the changes and putting a smile on their dial by adorning their mobiles with ornamental stickers, charms and beads -- and the craze just keeps getting bigger.

This Japanese fad is called dekodeen -- a portmanteau of the words "decoration" and "denwa" (phone) -- and its fans can be seen carrying glitzy phones personalized at home using accessories made just for the purpose, or created to an individual design by professionals at certain [cell phone](#) stores.

Earlier this month, consumer electronics chain Yamada Denki Co. opened its newly renovated Labi 1 Ikebukuro Mobairu Dorimu Kan (Mobile Dream Theater) in Ikebukuro, Tokyo.

On the fourth floor, decorative accessories including small bags of 20 glass beads and artificial jewels, such as rhinestones made of acrylic resin, are offered at 300 yen (about \$3.42) each.

Stick-on beads featuring geometric patterns and other designs cost upward of 1,000 yen (about \$11.41).

Tomoaki Nito, an executive and managing director of the chain said, "Stick-on decorative beads in cute colors including pink, and loud glittering rhinestones are popular, particularly among women aged about

30."

Nito pointed out that because attaching decorations to a phone can void the warranty, it is important to make sure that decorations can be easily removed. So a thin protective sticker is affixed to every phone's surface before accessories are attached to the protective layer using an adhesive.

For those who are not good with glue and beads, six staffers are on hand at Yamada Denki to decorate phones to your chosen design.

At the store, prices start from about 3,000 yen (\$34) for a phone professionally adorned with stickers, and from about 10,000 yen (\$114) for beading. If the desired decoration is simple, your sparkling new phone can be collected an hour later.

Many elderly people have taken to decorating their phones -- but they have given the dekoden idea a twist. Older dekoden fans turing up at the Yamada Denki store are asking for picture stickers depicting such things as rustic scenery to be attached to their cell phones.

Customers of all ages also are adding a sparkling touch to their MP3 players.

SWEET CELL PHONE TREATS

Tetsuo Watanabe, who runs Glam Baby, a store specializing in custom-designed dekoden phones, said, "There's more to decorating phones than just making them glittery and flashy."

Watanabe said one of these techniques has been dubbed "sweets deco" and involves attaching mock confectionary created out of resin to phones, including cake and whipped cream designs. Initials and heart symbols are also popular.

Watanabe said dekoden can be used to cover the scratched parts of old cell phones, making cheap used cell phones more popular. He said his store had seen a rising number of people requesting makeovers of older phones.

Watanabe said, "Considering the economic slump, it seems people are getting a little more use out of key items they always carry around by decorating them."

The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, held an exhibition on the theme of "Deko" last summer and its current exhibition "The Power of Decoration -- A Viewpoint on Contemporary Kogei" (studio crafts), will run until the end of January.

Flashiness was once considered to be in bad taste, and excessive decoration tended to be scorned. However, starting about five years ago, creatives began embracing lavish decoration in their artwork, and the influence of these artists on decoration trends is attracting great attention, a museum official said.

"Recently, I've come to feel that people no longer need to feel ashamed about openly declaring they like flashy things," said Takuya Kida, a senior researcher at the museum. "Also, thanks to this influence, it appears that dekoden, which used to be youth-driven, is starting to be accepted by a wider range of ages."

The deko trend now extends beyond decoration of cell phones.

Last year, Tanita Corp. launched its Hosu-K range of glittering pedometers, which sell for 4,725 yen (\$54).

There are five designs to choose from, all featuring flashy rhinestones. A Tanita official said the pedometer is aimed at young women who might

be unfamiliar with pedometers.

Keeping in step with fashion has never been so easy or fun.

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