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Russian Market for Fitness Wearables Growing, but Jawbone Dominates

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Moscow residents are embracing the trend for wearable fitness trackers, but while there is no shortage of options on the market, there are only a handful of gadgets that Russian consumers trust.

Anton Panteleev, head of PR at electronics chain M-Video, told the Moscow Times that over 85 percent of all sales in the sector come from Jawbone models. Panteleev chalks up the success of these fitness trackers to the company's strong marketing efforts and the attractiveness of the product, which comes in more color options than its competitors.

The dominance of Jawbone in the market is also apparent among customers of the Eldorado electronics chain. Eldorado representative Elena says Jawbone was the "pioneer" of the products in the Russian market, and she attributes the company's popularity in part to its early start here as well as its comprehensive app, which is available for both iOS and Android. The gadget also has a very easy-to-use interface, and includes the fairly innovative "smart

alarm," which allows the the device to detect a wearer's sleep cycles to wake him up at the best moment.

According to M-Video, the companies competing in this marketplace are targeting their products for particular audiences. For example, Garmin users tend to be more athletic with a preference for extreme sports; they also like to travel. Jawbone, on the other hand, is the choice for young fashionistas and those who want to incorporate healthy changes into their regular lifestyle. It also tends to appeal to urbanites.

Customer reviews from fitness-gadget.ru and svyaznoy.ru also indicate the popularity of Jawbone. The company's fitness trackers appear as the top choice on the site among reviewed trackers, although they only get 3 out of 5 stars from users. Criticisms include the absence of instructions in Russian, complete reliance on smartphone app for some of the options, crashes after software updates and lack of a water-resistant feature. On the positive side, Jawbone remains top-rated for its design and battery life.

The iHealth wireless activity and sleep tracker is also rated lower for its English-only interface design, a lack of Android platform and problems with the software updates.

Surprisingly, less popular models enjoy higher reviews, including the Prestigio Smart Wrist Pedometer and Fitbug Orb, both of which rated 4 out of 5 on average. Both products are commended for their stylish look, although the Prestigio only comes in black and neither works as a watch.

The long-awaited Nike fitness tracker is rated low on its design. Users have complained about the band catching onto things, easily collecting dirt and lacking versatility (it apparently only looks good with workout clothes).

Statistics provided by M-video and Eldorado show that the most popular trackers at the moment on the Russian market still remain those produced by A-list brands like Jawbone, Samsung and Sony, but lesser known firms are rising up in the charts.

The market is also becoming increasingly more personalized, with a clearer recognition of different physical activities and individual recommendations to users. "It is expected that by the end of the year, all known smartphone issuers will have their own fitness gadgets," said M-Video's Panteleev.

No Tracker? No Problem

There are plenty of digital options for maintaining a healthy lifestyle for those who don't want a fitness tracker monitoring their every movement. Here is a list of some top apps to keep you active, hydrated and healthy.

Running

Nike+ Running Club

No matter your opinion of Nike, the Nike+ running app offers a very comprehensive and easy-to-follow interface design. There's no need to swipe through five screens before you start your jog — the "RUN" button is clearly visible. The app also offers several music options, including "other source," so if you are using Spotify to keep you moving at the right pace, there is no clash between the two services. A voiceover will update you on your progress after every kilometer, telling you the time taken and the average pace. The app has both horizontal and vertical orientation, so it's easy to keep an eye on your time and pace whether you are holding your phone in your hand or wearing it on your arm.

Immediately after your run is finished, a detailed analysis appears on the screen, including the elevation pattern, pace throughout the run, fastest and slowest kilometers and a local map. There is also the additional bonus of being cheered on by the voices of your favorite athletes when you break personal records like fastest kilometer or longest run.

You can also choose to train with Nike Coach, which will create a personalized program according to your fitness level and goals, whether you are training for a 5K, 10K or the Moscow Marathon.

Finally, the app is easily connected with Facebook, which automatically creates a league table, record list and challenges options for additional motivation. Oh yes, and it's free.

RockMyRun

A good playlist makes all the difference when running for longer than five minutes, but creating the perfect mix to get your blood pumping takes time. This app can solve your problem, offering playlists and mixes to fit every music taste, from Aretha Franklin to Calvin Harris. The playlists last up to an hour and they can be downloaded for offline use, so there's no need to use the internet while running and drain your battery. The app has a very innovative and useful feature that allows the mix of music to be adjusted to your tempo — the phone detects the speed of your steps and raises or lowers the beat to keep your BPM steady.

The app itself is free and offers a 7-day free trial. Subscriptions then start at $2.99 per month for advanced features such as tempo adjustment. The app is definitely worth the money, but if you are already a Spotify subscriber and have unlimited data, the Spotify Running service offers roughly the same options.

Zombies, Run!

A favorite of the young adult set, this app is for those who haven't quite left their love of video games behind — or need some real adrenaline to keep them going. This is no ordinary run tracker app, but a quest. While running, you listen to the story of a character who has escaped the zombies and follow him on his mission to catch them, occasionally getting chased by zombies (accompanied by very realistic sound effects) and saving children. Over the course of the run, you collect items or drop them, if zombies manage to catch you. At the end of the mission you use the items to expand or upgrade the scenario or move to the next level.

Here, too, you can choose to train for a 5K or connect to your iTunes and play music between the episodes.

The app itself is free on both AppStore and GooglePlay, but includes in-app purchases.

The reviews suggest it is an uncontested success, and it makes running at night all the more exciting.

Eating Healthy

MyFitnessPal
This is by far the best all-around food and exercise tracker app on the market. Very simple to use, it includes a very wide search platform that incorporates American, British and Russian products, as well as features like a barcode scanner and the ability to input foods by hand. The tracking information is adjusted according to your personal goals and includes macronutrients breakdown in addition to calorie count.

It also includes an exercise log and water balance tracker.

The app is free and available for iOs and Android.

Green Kitchen
Started by an inspiring vegetarian family from Sweden, famous for their website greenkitchenstories.com, the app is a true life-saver for vegetarians. It features hundreds of tasty and original recipes, with easy-to-follow instructions and comprehensive ingredient lists. A recently added option is a timer for those in possession of an Apple Watch.

From starters and snacks to desserts and smoothies — not to mention the beautiful photos — this app will make you want to be a herbivore. Meat-free Mondays have never looked so glorious.

Green Kitchen is available at the AppStore for $4.99.

Keeping Hydrated

Waterbalance
Think it's easy to get in the 2 liters of water you're supposed to drink each day? Find out with this app, which asks users to log every beverage consumed and adjusts the water level on the little human figure on the screen accordingly. For example, the water level will rise after you logged in a glass of water, and go down if you admit to a glass of red wine.

The app also rewards you with badges if you manage to stick with it for longer than three days.

The app is free and available for iOs and Android.

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