

Tech firms see good times as flexible displays roll, and fold

January 8 2019, by Rob Lever, Glenn Chapman



At the Consumer Electronics Show on Monday, South Korean giant LG unveiled its ultra-high definition television that rolls into and out of a base stand and can be furled and unfurled on demand

Electronic displays that fold, roll and bend have finally arrived after years of development, and tech firms are touting the technology as a

potential source of growth and new applications.

At the Consumer Electronics Show on Monday, South Korean giant LG unveiled its ultra-high definition television that rolls into and out of a base stand and can be furled and unfurled on demand.

"It brings freedom of design to a space, without the limitations of a wall," LG [senior vice president](#) of marketing David VanderWaal said while introducing the OLED TV R.

A demonstration showed that the 65-inch (165 centimeter) screen could disappear completely into the base, extend just part way to display photos, act as a control screen for smart devices, or rise completely for full viewing.

LG did not disclose pricing for the roll-up television.

Chinese startup Royole meanwhile showed off what it claimed is the first foldable smartphone, which can fit into a pocket but unfold into a full-sized tablet computer, which is available in China and now is offered in the US for \$1,300.

"People want mobility but they also want large screens," Royole founder Bill Liu told a news conference as he showed the recently launched FlexPai device.



"Foldable phones is going to be a big trend this year," GlobalData research director Avi Greengart said, noting that most of new product announcements of that ilk were likely to be saved for the upcoming Mobile World Congress in Barcelona

"It's really a combination of a smartphone and tablet."

Other device makers are expecting to introduce foldable handsets this year, but Liu said the technology using superthin layers with nano-sized sensors offered a lot more than just more convenient phones.

Royole showed how the same flexible displays could be used for

automotive dashboards, wearables, and for various other commercial and industrial uses.

"We see this as the next generation of human-machine interface," Liu said.

"It can change the way we connect to everything."

Royole says its flexible sensor technology can be adapted for a variety of touchscreen applications with improved performance and lower costs than traditional screens.



David Byron, industrial design manager for Sundberg-Ferar, speaks about the

Hyundai Elevate, an "Ultimate Mobility" concept vehicle at CES

Cool and unique

Royole and LG were among the firms making media presentations ahead of the official opening of the January 8-11 Las Vegas event.

The two announcements could portend a wave of new products from tech firms this year and could offer a spark to a smartphone sector that has seen sluggish growth over the past year.

CES features 4,500 exhibitors across 2.75 million square feet (250,000 square meters) of exhibit space showcasing artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, smart homes, smart cities, sports gadgets and other cutting-edge devices. Some 182,000 trade professionals are expected.

GlobalData research director Avi Greengart said the roll-up television appears "cool" and offers "unique technology."

"Foldable phones is going to be a big trend this year," Greengart said, noting that most of new product announcements of that ilk were likely to be saved for the upcoming Mobile World Congress in Barcelona.

Samsung is widely believed to launch a folding handset sometime this year, possibly at the Barcelona event.

Greengart said he expected the challenge to folding smartphones to be on the software side, not with the displays, since applications will have to be designed to adapt to going from phone to tablet screen sizes.

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