Oppo’s rollable concept phone is pure potential lacking polish

Two hundred thousand. That’s the magic number of times Oppo wants its rollable X 2021 concept phone to be able to expand and contract before it’ll consider it durable enough to turn into a commercial device. That’s 200,000 times the device will need to be able to transform from a 6.7-inch phone into a 7.4-inch mini tablet, and 200,000 times it’ll need to successfully contract back.

But as it stands, Oppo says the Oppo X 2021 is durable enough to manage just half that, at 100,000 cycles. In theory, that’s already enough for around five and a half years of use if you open and close it 50 times a day, but as we’ve seen with early foldable devices, these figures sometimes don’t translate into the real world. The number shows the scale of the work Oppo still has to do on its concept, which it unveiled last November during its second annual “Inno Day” celebration.

Oppo wants it to be durable enough to survive 200,000 transformations

In durability terms, Oppo thinks it’s halfway toward turning its rollable phone from a concept into reality. But after having spent an afternoon using the company’s prototype device for myself, it’s clear that hitting this arbitrary number is far from the only challenge Oppo is facing in bringing this device to market.

At first glance, the Oppo X 2021 looks like a regular 6.7-inch smartphone, designed to do everything you’d expect a regular smartphone to be able to do. But at the tap of a button, the phone starts to whir and unroll its display to 7.4 inches in size, bringing it closer to the form factor of a small tablet.

Similar concepts have been announced by competitors ranging from LG (prior to its announcement that it’s quitting the smartphone industry) to TCL, but this is the first such functional device we’ve actually been able to try out for ourselves.