

Apps in the Name of ChatGPT - Smartphone Users Beware

February 21, 2023 - Over the past couple of months we've run a number of stories on the chatbot ChatGPT. In the event you unfamiliar with the platform, ChatGPT is an AI (artificial intelligence) powered chatbot that has the ability to answer questions asked of it in a concise manner; much like having a conversation with another person. Most recently, we conducted a short interview with the bot on matters of privacy, and I've personally made no secret of the fact that I've begun using the service on a fairly regular basis. So I wasn't really surprised that I started getting solicitations to download an app that appeared to be from ChatGPT. But when I took a closer look at the app, it was actually from China.

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(function() {
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];
```

```
s.type = 'text/javascript';
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);
})();
```

```
(function() {
var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;
po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);
})();
```

I have to admit that when I got solicited I was a little suspicious because the icon the app was using appeared to be the same icon used by another app that I'm familiar with. So when I followed the link to Google's Play Store - NOTE: I was seriously considering downloading it - I decided to do a little digging. The first thing I noticed was that the developer had nothing to do with ChatGPT. It didn't take me long to discover that it was a Chinese firm.

When I looked at the other apps being offered by the same firm, most of them appeared to be of a similar nature; trying to make you think that they were from places like Amazon, HP and other well-known developers.

What really struck me though was that this wasn't a one-off. There were a number of other developers attempting to do the same thing. Many of them were using the same app icons and all of ones that I found were located in China. ChatGPT is owned by Openai and is an American company. Oddly enough, Openai didn't have its name on any of the ChatGPT apps in the store. I don't know for sure, but I'm assuming that same is true if you look in the Apple App Store.

On further inspection, I also noticed variations of the ChatGPT name in each of the apps. Things like GPT Chat App and Chatbot GPT. By taking my time, it had become pretty clear that none of these apps were what I was looking for. And it is pretty clear that anyone downloading these apps is getting into some dangerous territory.

Just the fact that the apps are trying to make users think that they're something that they're not is a problem. Honest companies don't do that. Then the fact that the apps that I came across were Chinese meant that any data they collect is likely stored in China. There is no telling how that information will be used or who it will be sold to.

Quite honestly, I don't know if any of the apps actually interface with the real ChatGPT because I didn't install any of them. But even if they do, apps themselves have the ability to collect personal information and to potentially act as malware on your phone or other device. So you install them at your own peril. The bottom line here is that if you want to use ChatGPT or any other service, make sure that the company behind the service is actually the developer on the app. Otherwise you could just wind up having your privacy invaded and becoming the victim of some foreign scam.

by Jim Malmberg

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