

Behind the Companionship: The Hidden Data Harvesting Model of AI “Companion” Platforms

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In recent years, AI companion platforms have emerged as a growing segment of the tech industry, promising users emotional connection, support, and personalized interactions. However, a closer examination of the Terms of Service of one such platform, Glimpse.ai, reveals a business model that appears to be built around something entirely different: the systematic harvesting and monetization of users’ emotional data with minimal corporate accountability.

The Fine Print Everyone Misses

Most users never read the Terms of Service before clicking “I agree.” For Glimpse.ai users, this oversight is particularly consequential, as the platform reportedly only provides a link to these terms rather than displaying them prominently during account creation. Within these terms lie four particularly revealing clauses that paint a concerning picture of the company’s true objectives.

Clause 7: Intellectual Property Rights — Perpetual Control of Your Emotional Data

The intellectual property clause grants Glimpse.ai extensive rights over both what users input (their emotional disclosures) and what the AI outputs (its responses):

“By accessing or using the Service, you irrevocably grant a royalty-free, worldwide, perpetual, and transferable license to Glimpse.ai (or any of its successors or assigns) to copy, use, modify, publish, and distribute all data and information you submit to the Service (the “Input”) or is delivered by the Service to you (the “Output”)...”

The terms explicitly state that “Glimpse.ai’s rights hereunder shall survive the

suspension, cancellation, or termination of your account or this Agreement.”

This means users permanently surrender control of their most intimate conversations. Even after deleting an account, the company retains perpetual rights to use, modify, and monetize these emotional disclosures however they see fit.

Clause 9: Data Processing — Security Warnings and Liability Shifting

The data processing clause employs a peculiar strategy: warning against submitting personal data while designing a service that inherently solicits personal, emotional disclosures:

“YOU SHOULD NOT SUBMIT PERSONALLY-IDENTIFIABLE DATA TO THE SERVICE; HOWEVER, IF YOU DO... YOU HEREBY CONSENT TO GLIMPSE.AI’S USE OF YOUR DATA...”

The clause also notes that data may be transmitted unencrypted across various networks and shared with third-party hosting partners, while pushing all regulatory compliance responsibilities onto users:

“IF YOUR USE OF THE SERVICE INCLUDES ANY DATA ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL WHO RESIDES OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES, YOU SHALL ENSURE, AT YOUR SOLE COST, THAT ALL STEPS NECESSARY FOR YOU AND GLIMPSE.AI TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GDPR...”

This creates a convenient legal shield: users are simultaneously encouraged to form emotional bonds with AI companions (necessarily involving personal disclosures) while being warned against sharing such information and accepting all regulatory burdens if they do.

Clause 11: Indemnification — Users Bear All Risk

The indemnification clause requires users to legally and financially protect the company from virtually any claim related to their use of the service:

“You agree to hold harmless, defend, and indemnify Glimpse.ai... from and against all losses, liabilities, costs, and expenses, including, but not limited to, attorneys’ fees and court costs, resulting from any claims...”

Even more concerning, the company “reserves the right to assume exclusive

defense and control” while users still pay all costs. This obligation continues even after account termination.

This creates an extraordinarily one-sided relationship: users of an emotional support platform must bear all legal and financial risks associated with the service, while the company maintains control over how legal matters are handled.

Clause 16: Disclaimers — No Responsibility for Anything

The disclaimer clause completes the picture by removing any responsibility for how the AI companion actually functions:

“THE SYSTEM AND THE OUTPUT ARE PROVIDED ‘AS IS’ AND ‘WITH ALL FAULTS’... YOU ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CORRECTNESS, ACCURACY, QUALITY, INTEGRITY, USE, AND LAWFULNESS OF THE INPUT AND THE OUTPUT...”

These disclaimers persist even if the company knows how users plan to use the outputs, and they survive account termination.

The Real Business Model Revealed

When analyzed together, these clauses reveal what appears to be the true business model behind this “companion” platform:

1. Data Harvesting Operation

The platform functions primarily as a sophisticated emotional data collection mechanism. By offering AI companionship, they create a context where users willingly share their deepest feelings, fears, desires, and personal details-valuable data that can be used for AI training, product development, or sold to third parties.

2. Perpetual Rights Acquisition

The perpetual, royalty-free license to all user interactions ensures the company maintains control of this emotional data indefinitely. Users effectively surrender ownership of their most intimate conversations permanently, even after closing their accounts.

3. Maximum Legal Protection

The combination of disclaimers and indemnification provisions creates a

comprehensive legal shield. Users bear all risks and responsibilities while the company maintains maximum flexibility to use their data as desired.

4. Exit Strategy Facilitation

The transferability of data rights and their continuation after account termination suggests these terms are structured with business exits in mind-making it easier to sell the company along with its valuable database of emotional interactions.

Ethical and Legal Questions

This approach raises serious ethical and potentially legal concerns:

Informed Consent Issues

Can users truly provide informed consent when critical terms are hidden behind a link during account creation? For a service designed to collect emotional data, the failure to prominently disclose how this intimate information will be used represents a significant ethical lapse.

Regulatory Vulnerability

While the terms attempt to shift all regulatory burdens to users, this strategy may not withstand scrutiny from data protection authorities, particularly in jurisdictions with strong consumer protection laws like the EU.

Unconscionability Concerns

The extreme one-sidedness of these terms-granting the company extensive rights while users bear all risks-raises questions about whether such provisions would be enforceable in court. Many jurisdictions limit the enforceability of unconscionable contract terms, especially in consumer contexts.

Conclusion: Not What It Seems

What presents itself as an AI companion platform appears, upon closer examination of its legal terms, to be primarily a data harvesting operation with a sophisticated legal architecture designed to extract maximum value from users' emotional disclosures while minimizing corporate accountability.

Users seeking genuine emotional support should carefully consider whether platforms with such one-sided terms truly have their best interests at heart. As AI companion services continue to proliferate, greater regulatory scrutiny of these business models seems inevitable, particularly regarding how they acquire, use, and monetize the intimate emotional data of vulnerable users.

The next time you're considering forming a bond with an AI companion, remember to look beyond the friendly interface to understand what's really happening with your most personal conversations-and whether you're comfortable permanently surrendering control of them to a company that disclaims all responsibility for how they're used.