

Popular Chinese Face-Swapping App Allow Users To Be A Celebrity For The Day

Smartphones users in China seemed to have put aside the Russian face-aging app and have found a new obsession - Zao.

Created by Chinese developer MoMo, the app allows users to convincingly superimpose or deepfake their faces with celebrities, sports stars, public figures as well as video game characters in a video or GIF using artificial intelligence.

By uploading a selfie into the system, it will automatically map their faces on celebrities' bodies from scenes in movies, TV shows, performances, music videos and more.

Some users have amusingly and convincingly been seen placing their faces on Chinese stars as well as high-profile stars like Leonardo DiCaprio, Kit Harrington, Marilyn Monroe, and many others.

Zao became available to users on China's iOS App store last Friday and immediately went viral. It racked up millions of followers, making it the most downloaded app as of Monday, according to tracking firm App Annie.

Due to its soaring popularity and traffic, Zao's servers nearly crashed, a post from the app makers on China's Twitter-like platform Weibo said.

Although the face-swapping app has gone viral, it has also sparked backlash over privacy concerns and controversial policy. It has also brought into focus ways how artificial intelligence technology can trigger privacy fears.

Zao prompted concerns after it released a controversial user agreement, which initially stated that the app would keep and use customer's content for marketing purposes. As per the agreement, potential users could also lose the intellectual property rights to their faces.

Since then, the terms and conditions have been updated and the company reportedly said on Weibo that it would not utilize user-generated content uploaded unless they are pre-approved by the user. Zao will also use the images to improve the app and will remove it from their servers once the images are deleted by users.

This recent backlash comes months after FaceApp faced similar concerns over privacy.

Zao is only accessible to customers with registered Chinese phone numbers and isn't listed in the UAE, US or UK App store or Play Store.

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