OpenAI can’t register ‘GPT’ as a trademark – yet

The US Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) has denied OpenAI’s application to register the word GPT, which means generative pre-trained transformer, saying GPT is too general a term to register and can prevent competitors from correctly describing their products as a GPT.

OpenAI argued in its application that GPT is not a descriptive word – that GPT isn’t such a general term that consumers would “immediately understand” what it means.

The PTO wrote in its February 6th decision that it doesn’t matter if consumers don’t know what GPT means – because those who do use the technology understand GPT refers to a general type of software, not just OpenAI products.

Since the rise of generative AI, many other AI services have added GPT to product names. For example, there’s an AI detector startup named GPTZero. Other companies often refer to their foundational AI models as GPTs because they literally are.

The term GPT became closely tied to OpenAI after ChatGPT and its AI models GPT-3 (and later GPT-4) became popular. When it opened ChatGPT to outside developers, the company called its custom chatbots GPTs, too. Lately, OpenAI has been giving distinct brand names to other services, though. It recently released its text-to-video generation model named Sora.

Gizmodo notes that this isn’t the first time the US has denied OpenAI’s trademark claim for GPT; the first time was in May 2023. The company can appeal once more to the Trademark Trial

and Appeal Board for another shot at getting the term GPT trademarked.

https://www.theverge.com/2024/2/16/24075304/trademark-pto-openai-gpt-deny