

Chapter XVII

Spam and Advertisement: Proposing a Model for Charging Intrusion

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ABSTRACT

A significant problem of our times, accelerated by the advances in technology, is the plethora of commercial Internet messages usually defined as spam, while the equivalent in classic television emission is the frequent and uncontrollable advertisement. Advertisement, perceived as an expression and factor of the economy, is legitimate and desirable. However, abusive advertising practices cause multiple damage: invasion in our private communication space, homogenisation of morals and customs leading to globalized overconsumption. Variations and cloning of spam and advertisement include spim, distributed instant messaging using bulk SMS's over mobile telephone networks or the web, wireless attacks and penetration, targeted unsolicited online harassment and others.

DEFINITIONS AND PROVISIONS

Spam is usually defined as “unsolicited bulk e-mail”. This is generally done for financial reasons, but the motive for spamming may be social or political. Unsolicited means that the recipient has not granted verifiable permission for the message to be sent. Bulk means that the message is sent as part of a larger collection of messages, all having substantively identical content (Cheng, 2004).

Rough estimates conclude that e-mails like “Buy this product” or “Participate in this cam-

paign” are more than 60% of what is the normal daily load. Generally, the longer an email address has been in use, the more spam it will receive. Moreover, any email address listed on a website or mentioned in newsgroups postings will be spammed disproportionately. Mailing lists are also a good target (Loia, Senatore, Sessa, 2004).

Recent figures show a dramatic increase of spam trafficking (Jung, Sit, 2004). Although not easily verifiable¹, they are indicative of the extent:

- Spam trafficking has increased the last couple of years about 1.000 % in comparison to previous years.
- The average user now gets 6 spams per day, or over 2.000 per year. Of these, 24% of spam accounts for scams and fraud, 23% for product advertising, 14-19% for pornography -91% of users find these the most annoying- 11% for health remedies, 1% for politics.
- Up to 8% of internet users have purchased spam promoted goods and services.
- Up to 28% of internet users have replied to spam mail at some stage.
- Costs of spamming are so low that even a few replies in a million make the spammers' efforts profitable.

Although spam is readily conceived, confusion reigns over its phenotype (Robinson, 2003). More than the two thirds of e-mail account holders think that they can determine an e-mail message when they see it, while 9% have to open the message to ascertain the infringement. The extent

of intrusion is also variably conceived. 70% of e-mailers believe that spam has made being online “unpleasant or annoying”. 27% think spam is a “big problem” for them. However, a 14% thinks its impact is negligible (Grimes, Hough, Signorella, 2005; Fetterly, Manasse, Najork, 2004).

Spam has a rigorous impact on lost productivity. Many hours are lost daily on deleting unwanted email, reporting spammers or researching about companies that send spam (European Union, 2001)².

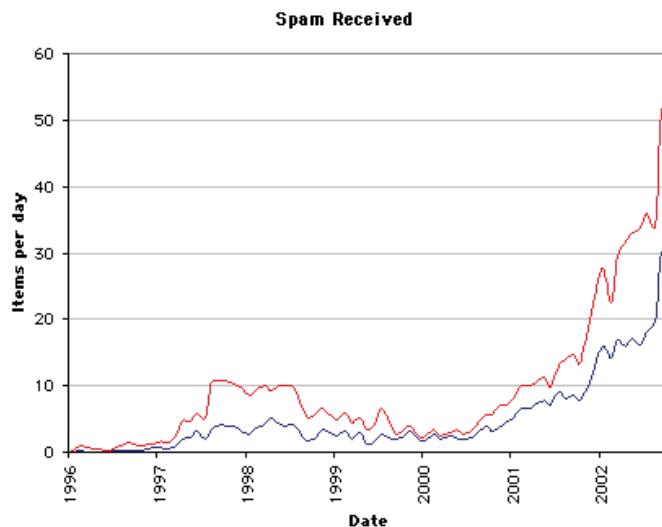
The evolution of the phenomenon is presented in Figure 1.

A variation of spam is spim. It is defined as unsolicited commercial messaging produced via an instant messaging (IM) system.

Marketers have never seen a medium they didn't want to exploit. So it is that spam has evolved to IM yielding spim. It's been around for a few years, but only in the past few months has it reached the threshold of disruption.

Most spim is generated by using “bots” according to IM providers and industry watchers. These automated programs simulate IM users and

Figure 1. The increase of spam trafficking. Bottom line: spam sent to reference accounts. Top line: Spam sent to all accounts



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