

Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Practical De-Anonymization in the Tor Network

Timing Leaks, Traffic Correlation, and Website Fingerprinting

Bachelor Thesis

Study Program: Information & Cyber Security

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to my family, relatives, and friends for all the support given to finish this thesis.

Abstract

The content of your thesis in brief.

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1 Problem Statement, Research Questions, and Vision

1.1 Problem Statement

The Tor network is widely considered secure, yet theoretical studies demonstrate that timing analyses and traffic correlation attacks can compromise user anonymity. However, practical investigations under controlled, local conditions remain scarce.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Can Website Fingerprinting attacks successfully de-anonymize Tor users in a locally simulated Shadow network?
2. To what extent do Tor's built-in circuit padding mechanisms reduce detection accuracy of such attacks?
3. What bandwidth and latency overhead do these defenses introduce?

1.3 Vision

2 State of Research

This chapter reviews existing research on Tor anonymization, website fingerprinting attacks, traffic analysis techniques, and circuit padding defenses.

3 Ideas and Concepts

4 Method(s)

4.1 Phase 1: Shadow Network Setup

Tor network simulation using Shadow/torrentools, Wikipedia mirror cloning, and wget2-based client configuration.

4.2 Phase 2: Baseline Data Collection

Packet capture and feature extraction from client nodes; training and evaluation of WF classifiers (e.g. Deep Fingerprinting CNN).

4.3 Phase 3: Circuit Padding Activation

Configuration of Tor's built-in padding mechanisms at various levels and corresponding data collection.

4.4 Phase 4: Comparison and Analysis

Comparative analysis of detection rates with and without padding, overhead measurement, and trade-off quantification.

5 Implementation

5.1 Baseline WF Attack Results

5.2 Circuit Padding Configuration

6 Validation and Evaluation

6.1 Performance Overhead

6.2 Limitations

7 Outlook

7.1 Ethical Considerations

Reflection on ethical aspects of the research.

7.2 Future Work

8 Appendices

8.1 Task Description

8.2 Project Management

9 Lists of Abbreviations, Figures, Tables, AI Tools, and Formulas

9.1 List of Abbreviations

HSLU — Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Tor — The Onion Router

WF — Website Fingerprinting

ISP — Internet Service Provider

NN — Neural Network

IDS — Intrusion Detection System

9.2 List of Figures

9.3 List of Tables

9.4 AI Tools Declaration

9.5 List of Formulas