

## Homework 1

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a) Importance: What are the major issues addressed in the paper? Do you consider them important? (1-2 paragraphs)

The issues addressed in this paper include identifying the weakest link in the spams value chain. Identifying this weak link can allow us to intervene on spam in hopes of reducing/getting rid of it. It is an important topic because spam is annoying and also leads to risky transactions. By damaging the payment chain, it would help reduce or maybe even completely hinder spam without the ability to have the user pay for a spam item.

b) Contribution: Do the presented results constitute a significant advance (e.g. technical depth, novelty, creative solution, etc.)? (1-3 sentences)

I think the results do constitute advance with the amount of URLs and redirects tracked. It shows the amount of 3rd parties involved in a spam transaction and also helps poke holes in the spam value chain, pointing to the payment portion. It was a rather unique analysis tracking these value chains.

c) Strengths: What are the most important reasons to accept this paper? (1-3 sentences)

The strengths of this paper were the real-life examples. Such as the pharmaceutical example provided. It shows that the value chain discussed is actually implemented in real life. Also, the depth of data that the paper used. The analysis included crawling around 15 million different URLs.

d) Weaknesses: What are the most important reasons NOT to accept this paper? (1-3 sentences)

As discussed in the paper, payments are the weakest part of the value chain used in spam. It briefly talks about how western-backed banks, such as Visa and Mastercard, are not used as much in spam transactions due to the high risk of spam, but I would like the paper to address this more. If western backs were to back spam, would this not be the weakest part of the value chain?

e) Summary and comments: Please provide a brief summary and detailed comments. (2-3 paragraphs)

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and characterize the paths taken when clicking on a spam link, and who is also involved in the spam 'value chain'. This value chain can include hosting proxies, redirectors, name servers, etc. in order to provide the customer with the ability

to purchase the spam. By analyzing and characterizing these paths taken, the paper believes they are able to then identify potential weaknesses in these spam 'value chains'.

There are three main stages used in the spam value chain: advertising, click support, and realization. Advertising is getting the ad into the hands of a user and enticing them to either click on a link or an image with an embedded link. Click support is the methods of redirection used with DNS and web servers. Then realization is when the user is actually purchasing the item represented in the spam.

List the three distinct stages of the spam value chain. What is the most valuable asset in the spam ecosystem that can be potentially controlled to effectively deal with spam?

1. Advertising
2. Click support
3. Realization

Realization can be potentially controlled to effectively deal with spam because it deals with the payment portion of spam, which the paper calls the most concentrated and important part of the value chain.