

## Spam e-mails tempt net shoppers

Computer users across the world continue to ignore security warnings about spam e-mails and are being lured into buying goods, a report suggests.

More than a quarter have bought software through spam e-mails and 24% have bought clothes or jewellery. As well as profiting from selling goods or services and driving advertising traffic, organised crime rings can use spam to glean personal information. The Business Software Alliance (BSA) warned that people should "stay alert". "Many online consumers don't consider the true motives of spammers," said Mike Newton, a spokesperson for the BSA which commissioned the survey.

"By selling software that appears to be legitimate in genuine looking packaging or through sophisticated websites, spammers are hiding spyware without consumers' knowledge. "Once the software is installed on PCs and networks, information that is given over the internet can be obtained and abused."

The results also showed that the proportion of people reading - or admitting to reading - and taking advantage of adult entertainment spam e-mails is low, at one in 10. The research, which covered 6,000 people in six countries and their attitudes towards junk e-mails, revealed that Brazilians were the most likely to read spam. A third of them read unsolicited junk e-mail and 66% buy goods or services after receiving spam.

The French were the second most likely to buy something (48%), with 44% of Britons taking advantage of products and services. This was despite 38% of people in all countries being worried about their net security because of the amount of spam they get. More than a third of respondents said they were concerned that spam e-mails contained viruses or programs that attempted to collect

personal information. "Both industry and the media have helped to raise awareness of the issues that surround illegitimate e-mail, helping to reduce the potential financial damage and nuisance from phishing attacks and spoof websites," said William Plante, director of corporate security and fraud protection at security firm Symantec. "At the same time, consumers need to continue exercising caution and protect themselves from harm with a mixture of spam filters, spyware detection software and sound judgement."