Consumer Perspectives on Spam:

Challenges and Challenges

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ITU WSIS Spam Conference
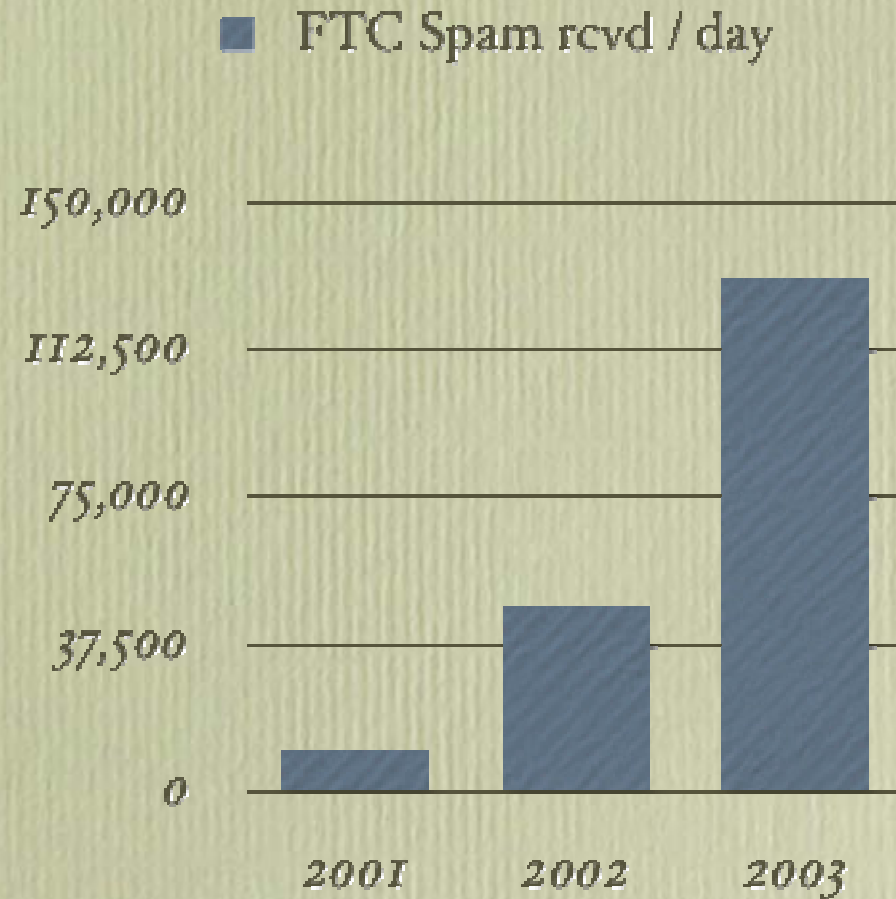
Geneva, Switzerland

7 July 2004

The Importance of Email

- Internet is fundamentally a two-way communications medium (compare with radio and TV) - *"Network not broadcast"*

- Email is most widely used Internet application (ahead of search engines, reading news, browsing web sites)

- 9 out of 10 Internet users use email

- Basis of other emerging applications - SMS, IM

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1. The Scope of the Problem

- "Governments need to work together to develop common approaches to address consumer concerns about unsolicited commercial email" (TACD 2001)

- 65% of all Internet email would now be considered spam (Brightmail, June 2004)

- Largest categories of spam: commercial products, financial services

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Spam is on the Rise

■ FTC Spam rcvd / day

Bar chart showing FTC Spam received per day. Y-axis: 0, 37,500, 75,000, 112,500, 150,000. X-axis: 2001, 2002, 2003. Bars rise from a small value in 2001, to roughly 47,500 in 2002, to approximately 130,000 in 2003.

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Spam – The Multiple Dimensions

- Identity theft, fraud and deception

- Network security

- Reduced consumer confidence

- Invasion of privacy (children, pornography, etc)

- Unsolicited paper mail may be an environmental problem; unsolicited commercial is a security problem

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2. Consumer Responses

- Reduce posting on publicly accessible web sites (*ineffective*)

- Create multiple email addresses (*impractical*)

- Limit disclosure of email addresses (*impossible*)

- Use email filters (*imperfect*)

- Challenge - response techniques (*complex*)

3.1 Consumer Education

- OECD - Spam Workshop (Feb 2004)

- EC - Communication on Spam (Jan 2004)

- DPAs - CNIL, UK Information Commission, US FTC

- NGO activities - AUI, Spamhaus, many others

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3.2 National Initiatives

- Spam Task Force, "Six Point Action Plan" (Canada 2004)

- Internet Society of China, "Anti-Spam Coordination Team (2002)

- Singapore or Information Technology Federation (2004)

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3.3 International Cooperation

- "Operation Secure Your Server" (US FTC 2004)

- Econsumer.gov (OECD 2003)

- "Net Abuse Workshop" (APCAUCE 2004)

- US, UK, AUS Anti-Spam Agreement (July 2004)

- AUS, THA Spam Accord (July 2004)

4.1 Government Frustration

- "We see different initiatives going in all different directions and the effectiveness is maybe not there." (P. Gerard 2004)

- Difficulties of enforcing European anti-spam Directive and absence of international system to track down violators (R. Thomas, 2004)

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4.2 "Policy Framework for Effective Spam Legislation" (US NGOs)

- Opt-In (enables trust)

- Users with legal rights

- Baseline legislation (not preemptive)

- Technological approaches

- International cooperation (public education, enforcement, standards)

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4.3 Consumer Attitudes Toward Spam

- 95% either hate spam or are annoyed by spam

- 83% believe most spam is fraudulent or deceptive

- 91% are concerned about children's exposure to spam

- 52% shop less online because of spam

- "Concerns about spam are shared by consumers around the world."

- *Source: 2004 TACD Survey*

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4.3 Practical Effects of Spam

- 66% said that spam cost them or their employer significant time or money

- 52% shop less online because of spam

- Only 17% who used a spam filter said it worked well

- *Source: 2004 TACD Survey*

4.3 Solutions to Spam

- 84% said that all unsolicited commercial email should be banned

- 82% said governments should only allow commercial email to be sent if the consumer has opted-in (TACD proposed "prior, affirmative consent" in 2001)

- 80% said it would be helpful if spam were labeled as advertising

- *Source: 2004 TACD Survey*

4.4 Pew Internet Survey

	2004	2003
Email users who have reduced use of email because of spam	29%	25%
Email users who say spam has made them less trusting of email	63%	52%
Email users who said spam made being online unpleasant or annoying	77%	70%

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4.5 Next Steps

- June 2004 - US FTC recommends against Do Not Email Registry -- would fail to reduce spam, could increase spam, not easily enforced. Recommended e-mail authentication

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4.6 Loss of Sender Privacy

- Proposal for Sender ID -- decrease spoofing and *phishing*

- More intrusive data collection, loss of user privacy depending on scheme adopted

- Right of anonymity = freedom of expression
    - CoE Declaration on Freedom of Communication on the Internet (2003)
    - US Constitutional law ("Watchtower Bible" 2002)

5. Conclusion

- Spam remains a critical concern for the future of the Internet

- Consumer education may help consumers identify privacy tools, but education is an incomplete solution

- Some solutions (filters, Sender ID) create new problems

- Consumers continue to face challenges and challenges

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EPIC to US Senate (2003)

- "Spam is a complex problem. There is no simple legislative solution. A multi-tiered approach that includes aggressive enforcement, better technology for identifying and filtering spam, and cooperation at the state and international level will be necessary."