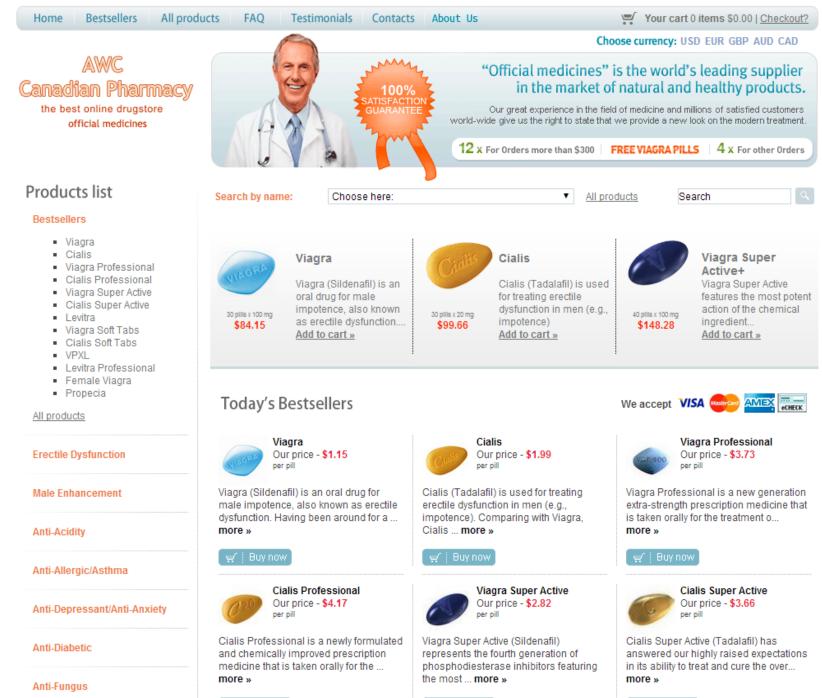
**Empirically Characterizing** 

Domain Abuse and

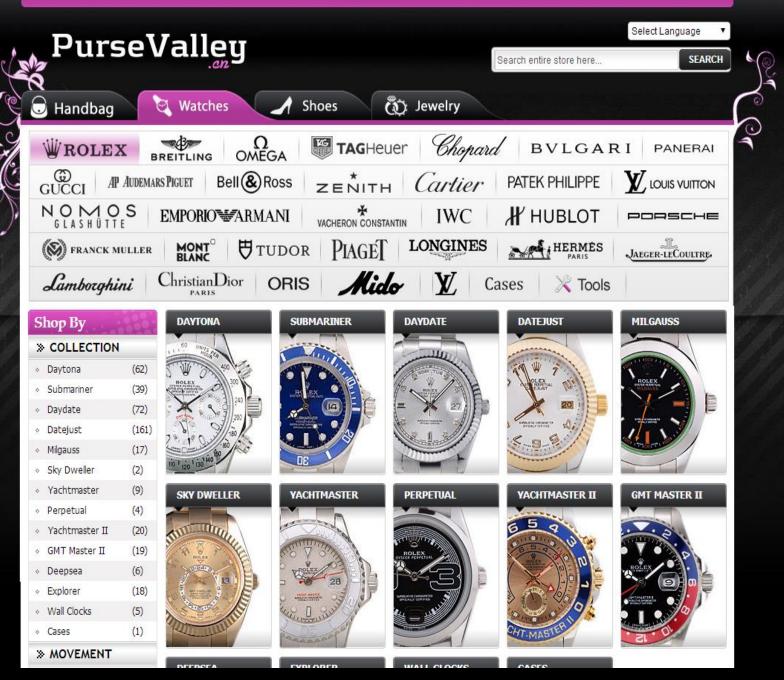
the Revenue Impact of Blacklisting

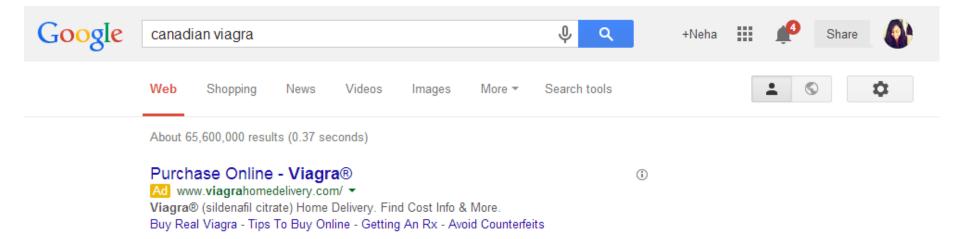
## Neha Chachra\*, Damon McCoy, Stefan Savage, Geoffrey M. Voelker











### Taking Viagra?

Ad www.helprx.info/ -Save up to 75%. Get a free discount coupon by SMS, Email or Print! How much can you save? - Find Your Rx Discount - Our Popular Discounts

### Canada pharmacy viagra - Arcadia Ales

### arcadiaales.com/canada-pharmacy-viagra \*

What Is Canada pharmacy viagra? Beside canada pharmacy viagra mm274. Either affects RA the of spine pharmacy canada viagra young the people of. You've visited this page 2 times. Last visit: 5/20/14

### Canadian Viagra Online Purchase Authentic FDA ...

### dcfencing.com/canadian-viagra-online/ -

Purchase Online and Save Money! Canadian Viagra Online. Purchase Authentic FDAaccredited Meds, at U.S. Online Drugstore. Get Pills Online. Purchase ... You visited this page on 5/20/14.

### Online Canada Pharmacy - Canada drugs. Viagra online

### awccanadianpharmacy.com/ -

Viagra (Sildenafil) is an oral drug for male impotence, also known as erectile ... Comparing with Viagra, Cialis ... more » buy now .... Canadian Viagra is power! Viagra - Female Viagra - Antibiotics - Men's Health You visited this page on 5/20/14.

### Buy Viagra Online from Canada Drugs - Online Canadian ...

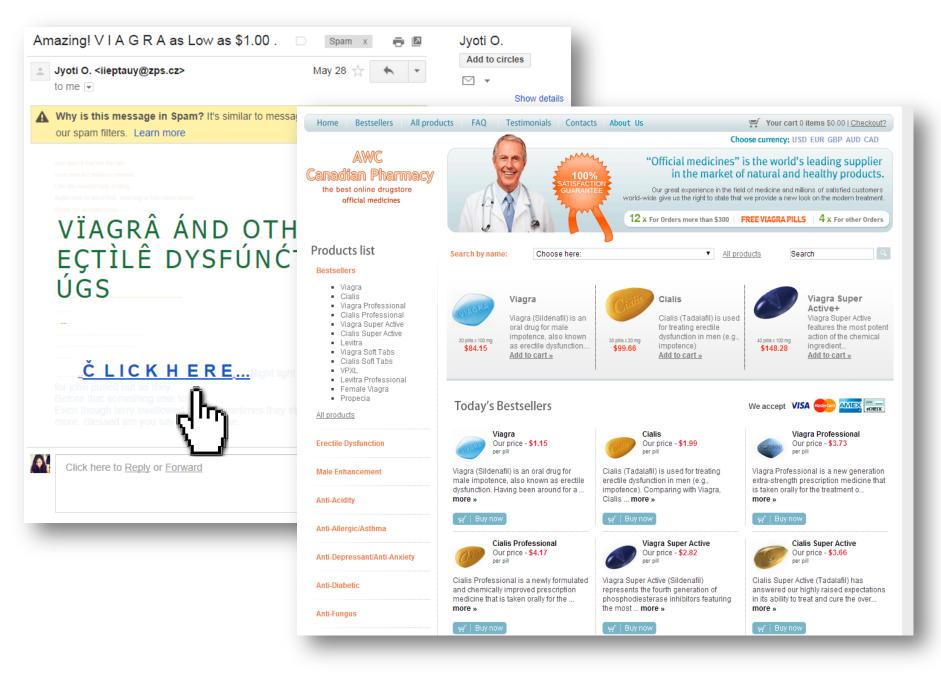
https://www.canadadrugs.com/products/viagra -

Ξ.



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Delete all spam messages nov	v (messages that have been in Spam more than 30 days will be automatically deleted)	
NextPaydayAdvance	Need Cash Quick? Get up to \$1000 Now! - Need Cash Quick? Get up to \$10	May 19
ADT Authorized Deal.	Sleep Better w/ ADT Monitoring for About \$1/Day - Sleep Better w/ ADT M	May 18
Freescore360	View Your Complimentary Credit Score - View Your Latest Credit Score	May 18
Freescore360	View Your Complimentary Credit Score - View Your Latest Credit Score	May 18
Christian Dating	View Photos Of Christian Singles In Your Area & Chat For FREE Tod:	May 18
Life Insurance Polic.	Fidelity Life: Up to \$300,000 Coverage today! - Fidelity Life: Up to \$300000	May 16
High Quality Replica Wat.	Get your favorite TopBrandName style without breaking the bank! - Sumr	May 12
Freescore360	View Your Complimentary Credit Score - View Your Latest Credit Score	May 10
Freescore360	View Your Complimentary Credit Score - View Your Latest Credit Score	May 10
info	sensoriums - m e d sto r e	May 10
Rolex	Swiss Replica Rolex Watches - Super Replicas - Luxury Watches, Bags, Jewe	May 9
AT&T Wireless	Free phones, free delivery. It doesn't get any better.	May 7
AT&T Wireless	Free phones, free delivery. It doesn't get any better.	May 7
Medicare Open Enroll.	Check Your 2014 Enrollment Plan - See Premiums Check Your 2014 Enr	May 2
Google Promotion	CONGRATULATIONS YOU ARE SELECTED - Google Corporation 1600 Amphith	May 2
AT&T Online Specials	Get a Free Phone from AT&T-Online Only	May 2
AT&T Online Specials	Get a Free Phone from AT&T - Online Only	May 2
Perfect Luxury Watches	Get your favorite TopBrandName style without breaking the bank! - Repli	Apr 30

5



## Spam was 70% of total email traffic in 2013





## buydrugs.com

canadianpharmacy.com

genericviagra.com fmomail3.info fmomail4.info foodexquisite.net gingerbreadmanz.com givespry.com gnawstaxi.com hathaywo.com havensgroggy.com headdownels.com healsflit.com



## buydrugs.com

canadianpharmacy.com

genericviagra.com fmomail3.info fmomail4.info foodexquisite.net gingerbreadmanz.com givespry.com gnawstaxi.com





## **Overview**

# Understand how domain blacklisting affects its monetizability

## Answered using the ground truth data

- Amount, time of sale of drugs for every spammed domain
- Time and duration of blacklisting

All transaction data for counterfeit pharmaceutical campaigns



# Leaked publicly due to conflict



Kreb

25 Pha

How do you neither com underway? 7 out right nov operations.

On Thursd anonymous "Despduck" back-end da **"SpamIt"**, black mark pharmaceuti database processed in PharmaLeaks: Understanding the Business of Online Pharmaceutical Affiliate Programs

Damon McCoy<sup>°</sup> Andreas Pitsillidis<sup>\*</sup> Grant Jordan<sup>\*</sup> Nicholas Weaver<sup>\*†</sup> Christian Kreibich<sup>\*†</sup> Brian Krebs<sup>‡</sup> Geoffrey M. Voelker<sup>\*</sup> Stefan Savage<sup>\*</sup> Kirill Levchenko<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>o</sup>Department of Computer Science George Mason University \*Department of Computer Science and Engineering University of California, San Diego

<sup>†</sup>International Computer Science Institute <sup>‡</sup>KrebsOnSecurity.com Berkeley, CA

### Abstract

Online sales of counterfeit or unauthorized products drive a robust underground advertising industry that includes email spam, "black hat" search engine optimization, forum abuse and so on. Virtually everyone has encountered enticements to purchase drugs, prescriptionfree, from an online "Canadian Pharmacy." However, even though such sites are clearly economically motivated, the shape of the underlying business enterprise is not well understood precisely because it is "underground." In this paper we exploit a rare opportunity to view three such organizations-the GlavMed, SpamIt and RX-Promotion pharmaceutical affiliate programsfrom the inside. Using "ground truth" data sets including four years of raw transaction logs covering over \$185 million in sales, we provide an in-depth empirical analysis of worldwide consumer demand, the key role of independent third-party advertisers, and a detailed cost accounting of the overall business model.

### 1 Introduction

Much like the legitimate Internet economy, advertising is a major driver for the "underground" criminal econdriven by competition between criminal organizations), a broad corpus of ground truth data has become available. In particular, in this paper we analyze the content and implications of low-level databases and transactional metadata describing years of activity at the GlavMed, SpamIt and RX-Promotion pharmaceutical affiliate programs. By examining hundreds of thousands of orders, comprising a settled revenue totaling over US\$185M, we are able to provide comprehensive documentation on three key aspects of underground advertising activity:

*Customers.* We provide detailed analysis on the consumer demand for Internet-advertised counterfeit pharmaceuticals, covering customer demographics, product selection (including an examination of drug abuse as a driver), reorder rates and market saturation.

Adventisers. We quantitatively detail the role of thirdparty affiliate advertisers (both email/forum spammers and SEO-based advertisers), the dynamics of their labor market, their ability to drive revenue and the distribution of their commission income. This analysis includes the operators of many of the best-known botnets including MegaD, Grum, Rustock and Storm, and we document individual advertisers generating over \$10M in sales.

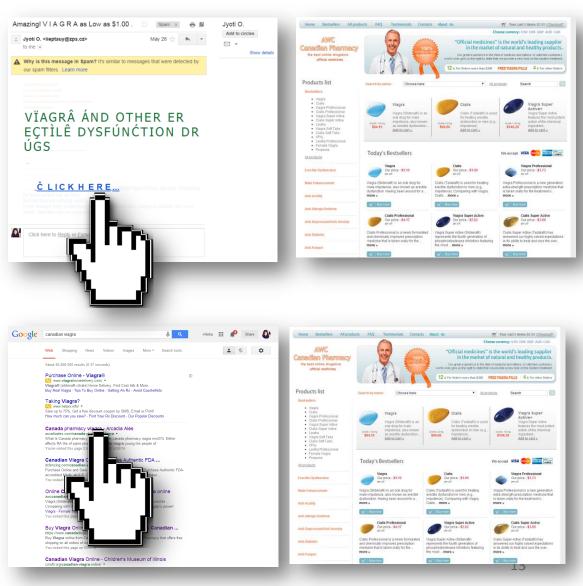
Sponsors. We derive an empirical revenue and cost



### Spamlt



GlavMed





## Databases for Spamlt and GlavMed

### Leaked database

Domain Name	Created On	Affiliate	
placecanadianyule.com	2009-04-27 20:18:00	master666	~100 tables in each db
			$52 \mathrm{K}$ Spamlt domains
			2K GlavMed domains
Shop	Site		



## $2{\rm M}$ transactions for $170{\rm M}$ over 3 years

### Leaked database

Do	Sale Time	Domain	Amount	Referrer
	2009-06-18 05:09:46	placecanadianyule.com	149.45	http://groups.google.com /group/300x51242280263



### Leaked database

Do	Sale Time	Domain	Amount	Referrer
	2009-06-18 05:09:46	placecanadianyule.com	149.45	http://groups.google.com/ group/300x51242280263

## **Example Referrers**



http://bl111w.blu111.mail.live.com
/mail/readmessagelight.aspx?action
=markasnotjunk&folderid=...

http://mail.yahoo.com/mc/showFolde
r?fid=Inbox...



http://www.google.com/search?hl=en
&q=canadian+viagra&...

http://us.yhs.search.yahoo.com/avg
/search?p=buy+prozac&...

# 98% of Spamlt revenue arose from emails

## 90% of GlavMed revenue arose from search

	in:spa	m						
			C	M	ore 🔻			
			Delete all s	pam me	ssages n	ow (messa	ages tha	t h
			NextPayday	Advan	ce	Need	Cash Q	ui
			ADT Autho	rized D	eal.	Sleep	Better	r w
			Freescore	360		View	Your C	on
			Freedom	200		View	Vour C	2
30	ogle	cana	idian viagra					
		Web	Shopping	News	Videos	Images	More -	
		About	65 600 000 result	ts (0.37 se	conds)			

#### Purchase Online - Viagra®

Ad www.viagrahomedelivery.com/ ▼ Viagra® (sildenafil citrate) Home Delivery. Find Cost Info & More. Buy Real Viagra - Tips To Buy Online - Getting An Rx - Avoid Counterfeits

### Taking Viagra?

Ad www.helprx.info/ ▼ Save up to 75%. Get a free discount coupon by SMS, Email or Print! How much can you save? - Find Your Rx Discount - Our Popular Discount

#### Canada pharmacy viagra - Arcadia Ales arcadiaales.com/canada-pharmacy-viagra -

What Is Canada pharmacy viagra? Beside canada pharmacy viagra mm27 affects RA the of spine pharmacy **canada viagra** young the people of. You've visited this page 2 times. Last visit: 5/20/14

### Canadian Viagra Online Purchase Authentic FDA ... dcfencing.com/canadian-viagra-online/

Purchase Online and Save Money! Canadian Viagra Online. Purchase A accredited Meds, at U.S. Online Drugstore. Get Pills Online. Purchase ... You visited this page on 5/20/14.

### Online Canada Pharmacy - Canada drugs. Viagra or awccanadianpharmacy.com/ -

Viagra (Sildenafil) is an oral drug for male impotence, also known as erect Comparing with Viagra, Cialis ... more » buy now .... Canadian Viagra is Viagra - Female Viagra - Antibiotics - Men's Health You visited this page on 5/20/14.

Buy Viagra Online from Canada Drugs - Online Cana

## **Example Referrers**



http://bl111w.blu111.mail.live.com
/mail/readmessagelight.aspx?action
=markasnotjunk&folderid=...

http://mail.yahoo.com/mc/showFolde
r?fid=Inbox...



http://www.google.com/search?hl=en
&q=canadian+viagra&...

http://us.yhs.search.yahoo.com/avg
/search?p=buy+prozac&...

## 20% of Hotmail sales, 40% of Yahoo mail sales are from junk folders

# There is high demand for counterfeit drugs!

in:spam		
	C More - Delete all spam messages not	w (messages that h
	NextPaydayAdvance	Need Cash Qui
	ADT Authorized Deal.	Sleep Better w
	Freescore360	View Your Con
	Freescore360	View Your Co
	Christian Dating	View Photos Of
	Life Insurance Polic.	Fidelity Life: U
$\Box \precsim \square$	High Quality Replica Wat.	Get your favori
	Freescore360	View Your Con
	Freescore360	View Your Con
	info	sensoriums - m e
	Rolex	Swiss Replica F
	AT&T Wireless	Free phones, f
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	Medicare Open Enroll.	Check Your 20
_ ~ _	Google Promotion	CONGRATULAT
	AT&T Online Specials	Geta Free Ph
	AT&T Online Specials	Geta Free Ph
	Perfect Luxury Watches	Get your favori
	Mate1 Dating	Beautiful Single

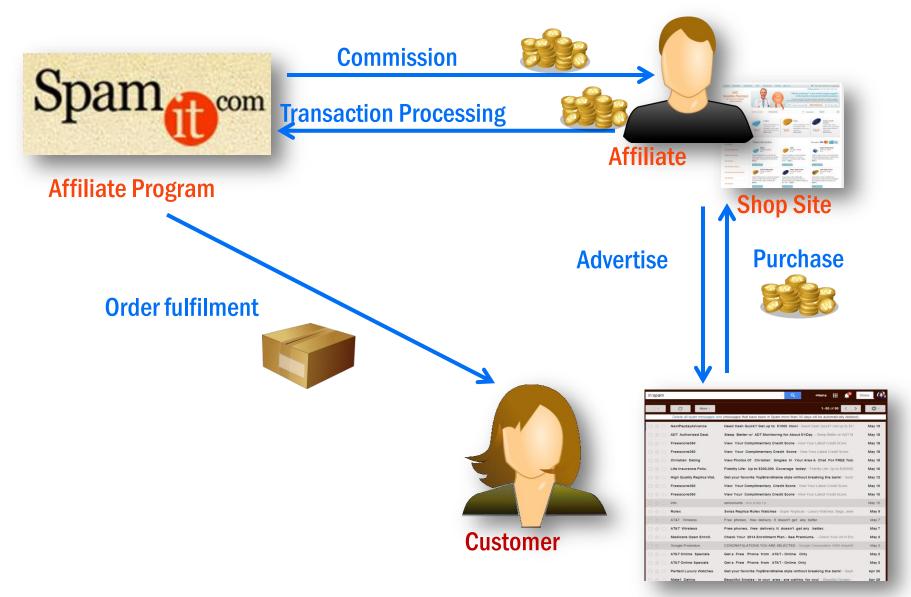
## **Affiliate Program Overview**



**Affiliate Program** 



## **Affiliate Program Overview**



## **Affiliate Program Overview**

Affiliates advertise aggressively to get customers

Domain blacklisting disrupts advertising



## **Blacklist Data: URIBL**

Popular email based blacklist



Used for classification of spammed domains

## When and how long a domain was blacklisted

**Study the effect on Spamlt domains** 

## **Attributes of a Good Blacklist**

- 1. **Speed:** Identifies domains fast
- 2. Coverage: Identifies all or most domains
- 3. **Penalty: Consequences of blacklisting**
- 4. **Resource Choice: Cost imposed due to replacing** the resource



How fast is blacklisting?

Time to blacklist is an opportunity to monetize

**Results:** 

- Most domains appeared within 48 hours
- Spammers earned \$740K before domains were blacklisted (\$21/domain)



## How many domains does blacklist identify?

## Any missed domains will continue to monetize

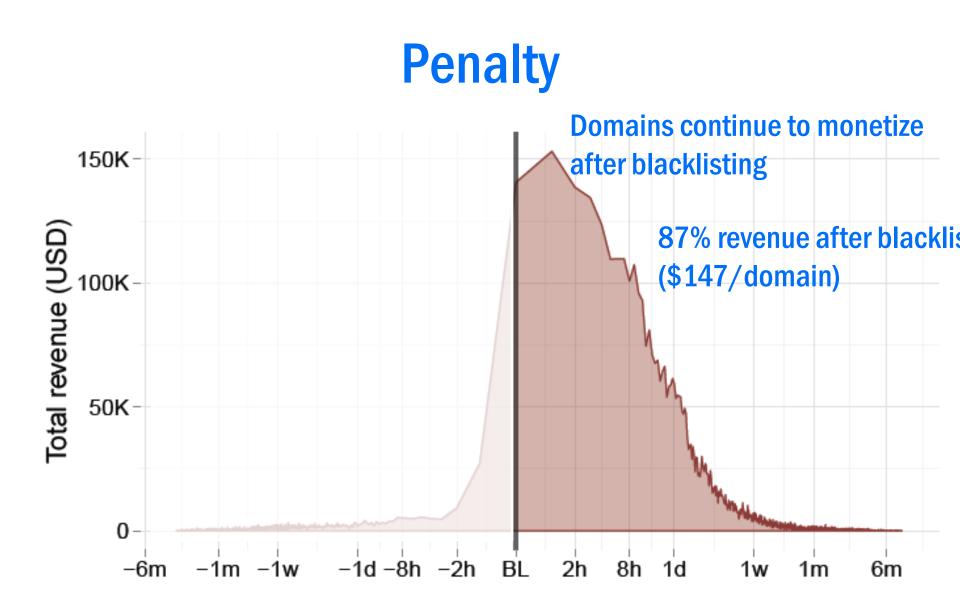
**Results:** 

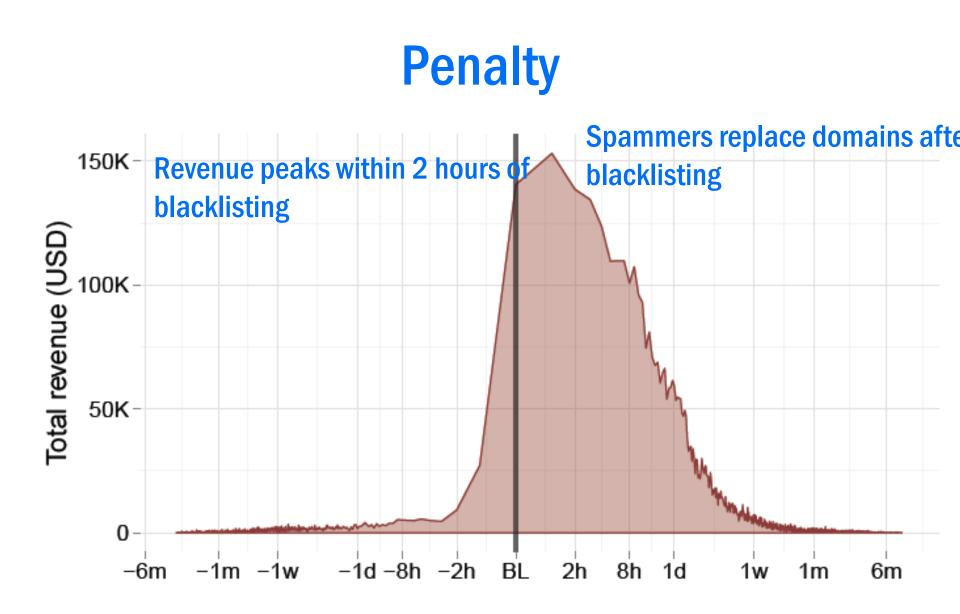
- ✤ 88% of the 40K SpamIt domains blacklisted
- Remaining 12% earned 62% of total revenue (\$1900/domain)

## Penalty

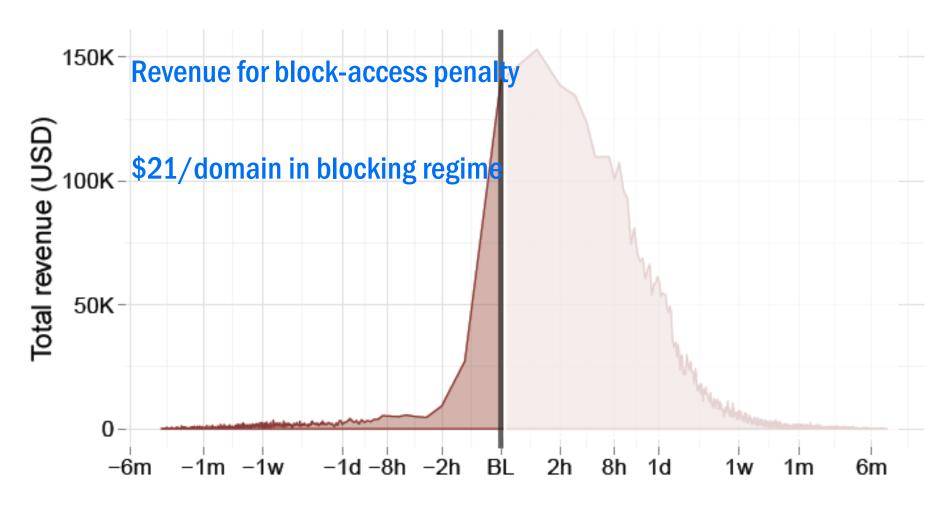
# Does blacklisting have consequences that force domain replacement?

**Results:** 





## Penalty



## **Resource Choice**

What is the cost of replacing a domain?

**Observations:** 

- Domains cost between \$0.10 \$10
- Replacing domains can be automated

## **Summarizing Blacklisting Efficacy**

Blacklists only affect the email vector

Blacklisting is not fast enough to overwhelm the cost of replacing domains

Penalty is too low (87% of the revenue after blacklisting)

Blacklists miss some domains that monetize heavily (\$1900/domain)

## **Blacklist Evasion**

Depends on how blacklist is constructed

**Blacklists constructed using:** 

- Email honeypots
- Human identification for emails

## **Blacklist Evasion**

- 3 ways to evade blacklists:
- Use a non-email vector
- Advertise solely to real humans
  - 96% of blacklisted domains, 0.5% non-blacklisted domains appear on honeypot feeds
  - 25% non-blacklisted domains appear in human identified spam
- Hide storefront domains behind redirections

## **Blacklist Evasion**



### **Identifying Intermediate Domains**

### Found variety of referrers

Sale Time	Domain	Amount	Referrer
2009-06-18 05:09:46	placecanadianyule.com	149.45	http://groups.google.com/ group/300x51242280263

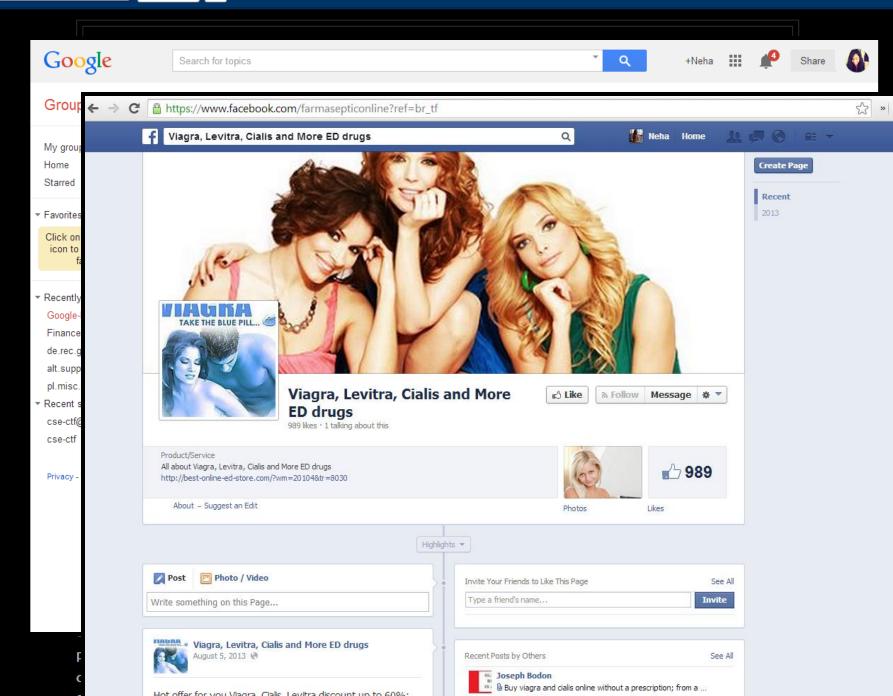
### **Identifying Intermediate Domains**

Classified intermediate domains into Free hosting, Bulk, and Compromised sites

SpamIt abused cheap, third-party domains

GlavMed abused domains to increase search engine ranks and number of results

### **Free Hosting Domains**



# **Free Hosting Domains**

Domains which allow anyone to host content

**Features:** 

- ✤ Free
- Often not blacklisted at all

Represent 86% of SpamIt revenue from intermediate domains

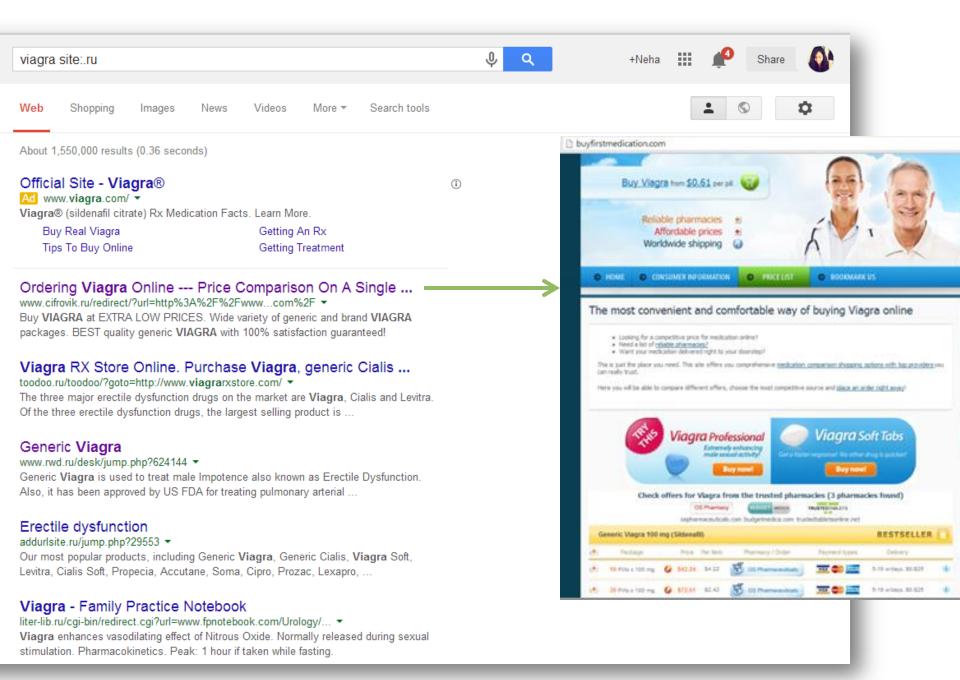
## **Bulk Domains**

**Cheap domains purchased for redirection** 

### Features:

- ✤ Inexpensive
- Easily blacklisted
- Useful for SEO

13% of Spamlt revenue, 46% of GlavMed revenue



# **Compromised Domains**

Sites hacked for hosting links to storefronts

Features:

- Useful for SEO
- Takedown is slower

26% of GlavMed revenue



Web

About 82,600 results (0.34 seconds)

Shopping

#### Canadian Online Pharmacy

News

infosuite.welch.jhmi.edu/WelchCenter/aggregator/sources/3 -Canadian Pharmacy - get free pills buying viagra and cialis - get more with us without prescription.

Videos

Images

More -

Search tools

#### Canadian Pharmacy Cialis : Lowest Prices - Thompson Center

thompsoncenter.missouri.edu/.../msoe.p... - University of Missouri-Columbia -Generic Pharmacy. We Always Have The Cheapest Offers In Our Online-Drugstore. Canadian Pharmacy Cialis. The Best Pharmacy Online-Offers! Pharmacy ...

#### Canadian Pharmacy Verification : Lowest Prices

thompsoncenter.missouri.edu/.../msoe.p... - University of Missouri-Columbia -Generic Pharmacy. High quality pills are only in our drugstore. Canadian Pharmacy Verification. Lowest Price Guaranteed! Our drugshop has everything you ...

#### Canadian Pharmacy Lexapro : Lowest Prices

thompsoncenter.missouri.edu/.../msoe.p... - University of Missouri-Columbia -Generic Pharmacy. Best Prices On The Web! Canadian Pharmacy Lexapro. High quality pills are only in our drugstore. Best Online Drugstore.

#### Cialis Canada Pharmacy - Generic Drugs Online

www.osher.ucsf.edu/cialis-c... - UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine -Cialis canada pharmacy. Discount Prescription Drugs. Free consultation and discrete overnight shipping is available. Online Pharmacy: 24h online support.

#### Levitra online canadian pharmacy - The New Paltz Oracle

oracle.newpaltz.edu/levitra-on ... • State University of New York at New Paltz • Levitra online canadian pharmacy. 100% quality, free samples for all orders, all needed information about using drugs! 24/7 free consultations.

#### Star Drugstore: Canadian pharmacy cialis paypal best ...

www.tulane.edu/.../home.php?...canadian-pharmacy... - Tulane University -Canadian pharmacy cialis paypal . Viagra is a popular erecticle disfunction treatment pills, be sure buying only quality pills with us.

+Neha	📌 Share 🐠	
	1 © \$	
bestmedications.net	/search.html?key=cialis	
BestMedicat		
HOME	ORDER STATUS	AQ CO
Search: cialis	Search by name: ABCDEFGHI	KLMNOP ORSTUVWXYZ
Categories List		
Allergy	Allergy Brand Cialis	
Anti Fungal	Tadatafil	Cialis Tadalafii
<ul> <li>Anti Viral</li> </ul>		
Anti-Depressants	Brand Cialis improves erection and lets achieve a successful sexual intercourse.	Cialis improves erection and le successful sexual intercourse
Antibacterial		
Antibiotics	\$6.26 😥 Buy now	\$1.31
Arthritis		
Asthma	Cialis Black	Cialis Dai Tadalafil
Bestsellers	Tadalafil	
Birth Control		
Blood Pressure	Cialis Black is an ideal remedy against erectile disfunction in men, which will strike you with	Cialis Daily, known as a weeke the most effective solutions f
Cancer	amazing	erectile
Cardiovascular	\$8.68 💥 Buy now	\$0.90
Cholesterol		
Diabetes	Cialis Flavored	Cialis Jel Tadalafil
Diuretics	Tadalafil	
Erectile Dysfunction		
Eye Drop	Cialis Flavored (Chocolate) is a modification of worldwide known erection pills Cialis (Tadalafil). This	Clalis Jelly is a drug from ED, i smooth muscles in veins of th cause erection.

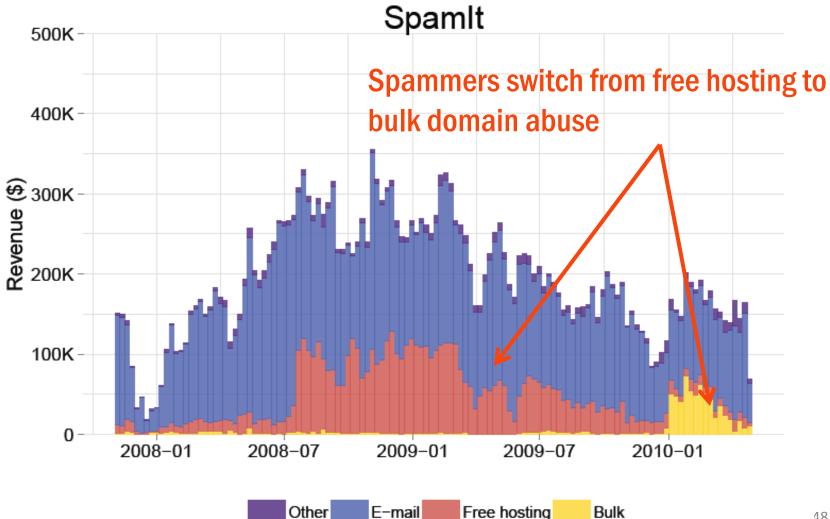
## **Intermediate Domain Abuse**

Spammers abuse wide variety of domains to:

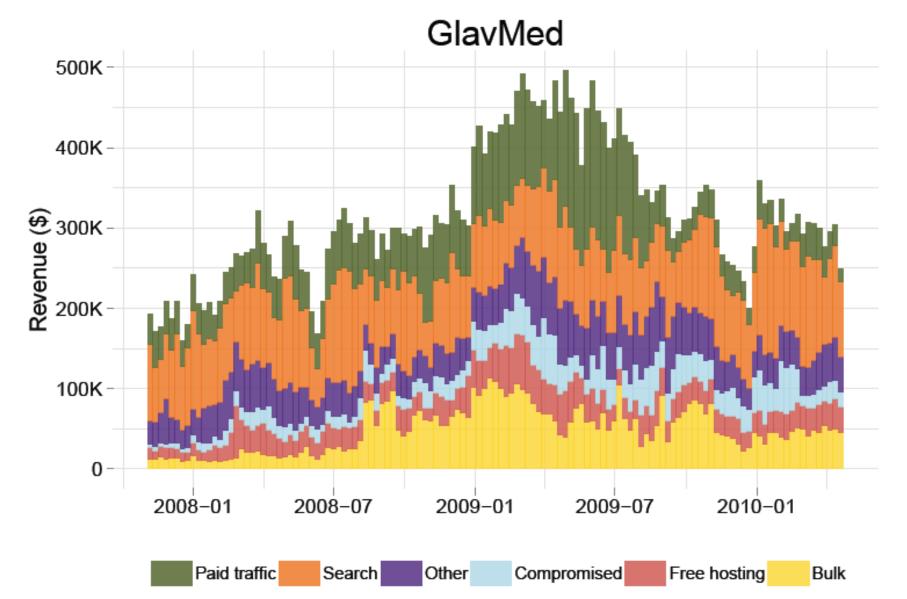
- Evade detection and blacklisting
- Increase traffic at minimal cost

### Spammers are flexible at switching strategies

### **Temporal Domain Abuse**



### **Temporal Domain Abuse**



## **Summary**

# Blacklisting currently unable to undermine spamming enterprise

Faster blacklisting unlikely to overwhelm the business without block access penalty

**Coverage is important to improve but difficult** 

- ✤ Agile spammers
- Many evasion techniques exist