Blocking spam calls with mobile apps

1.7 million M’sians receive 30 million sales and scam attempts this year

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PETALING JAYA: From telemarketers offering credit cards and insurance to criminal Macau scam syndicates, Malaysian mobile phone users are being harried by a growing number of spam calls.

Anti-spam mobile application Truecaller said that 1.7 million users in Malaysia receive more than 30 million spam calls this year, alone which the app managed to block.

“Spammers are taking advantage of the current climate, where users are more vigilant and are more likely to report spam,” said Truecaller’s director of communications Kim Fai Kok.

Truecaller claims to have 256 million users worldwide and has offices in Sweden, United States and India.

There were 16.8 million unsolicited mobile phone users and 33.3 million unsolicited users in Malaysia at the end of June this year, according to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC).

Kim said Truecaller users in Malaysia receive an average of six spam calls a month, the second highest in South-East Asia after Indonesia where users get an average of eight.

Users in Singapore and Thailand receive four respectively, while in Vietnam, the country has the lowest, even lower at two, said Kim.

He said the major driver of spam calls in Malaysia are those offering financial services, which account for 67% of the spam calls.

Typically, these are banking products or credit card companies.

Another major problem that Malaysians have to deal with is unsolicited telemarketing calls that make up 11% of total spam calls reported.

Kim said telemarketing calls can further be damaged into personal or non-personal marketing calls spread over by being done by analytics firms on behalf of their clients, or new device outreach for services and subscriptions.

Another problem is calls from insurance companies offering, or selling data and offering promotions to make offers.

The Personal Data Protection Act 2010 regulates and protects the use of personal data collected by companies including banks, hotels and airlines.

As an individual who keeps getting spam calls from these companies and finds that their personal data may have been passed on to others.

The act also protects the consumer’s data from being sold or shared with third parties.

Another problem is the rising trend of spam calls from scammers.

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) said that telemarketing fraud cases involved an estimated RM362 million in this year alone, with the Macau Scam being the most common.

MCMC said that the number of complaints received in the last five years has increased significantly, with the number of cases increasing from 2013 to 2016.

“Spammers are becoming more sophisticated, and are using advanced technologies to make calls look like they are coming from legitimate numbers,” said the MCMC.

The commission said that spammers are using fake phone numbers and are becoming more sophisticated in their tactics.

Spammers are also using artificial intelligence to generate fake numbers and are targeting specific targets.

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