



Cyber Criminals Targeting UK Retailers: An Ongoing Investigation

Description

Detectives scrutinizing a series of cyber assaults on UK retailers are directing their attention towards a notorious group of cyber criminals, predominantly young English speakers, including some adolescents. Authorities have indicated that the infamous hacking group, known as Scattered Spider, may be responsible for disruptive attacks affecting esteemed institutions such as M&S, Co-op, and Harrods, alongside certain US retailers.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has, for the first time, acknowledged the group's significance in its continuing investigation into these breaches. Paul Foster, head of the NCA's cyber crime unit, stated that while they are examining Scattered Spider, they maintain a multitude of hypotheses, emphasizing the importance of tracking down the culprits behind these incidents. Foster underscored the urgency, declaring that apprehending those responsible is their utmost priority, particularly given the extensive damage caused.

The wave of attacks, which initiated around Easter, has emptied store shelves, led to the suspension of online ordering, and resulted in the theft of private data belonging to millions. The hackers have utilized DragonForce—a platform that equips criminals with tools to execute ransomware incidents. However, the identities of the hackers remain elusive, with no arrests made to date.

Cybersecurity experts suggest that the cybercriminals exhibit characteristics associated with Scattered Spider, a loosely affiliated collective, often comprising younger individuals who coordinate through platforms like Discord and Telegram. Although the NCA is exploring various facets of the cyber crime landscape, it is clearly tracking the same leads.

Foster noted that while Scattered Spider primarily communicates in English, their operations are not necessarily confined to the UK. The methods employed during the attacks have not been disclosed. However, insights reveal that Scattered Spider often manipulates IT help desks using social engineering tactics to facilitate breaches. A former teen hacker emphasized the availability of hacking tools online, suggesting that even inexperienced individuals may engage in cybersecurity breaches with relative ease, albeit often facing significant legal consequences.

Vocabulary List:

1. **Scrutinizing** /'skruː.tɪ.naɪ.zɪŋ/ (verb): Examining something very carefully.
2. **Notorious** /nəʊ'tɔː.ri.əs/ (adjective): Famous or well-known typically for some bad quality or deed.
3. **Hypotheses** /haɪ'pɒθ.ə.siːz/ (noun): Proposed explanations for a phenomenon based on limited evidence.
4. **Disruptive** /dɪs'rʌptɪv/ (adjective): Causing or tending to cause disruption or chaos.
5. **Elusive** /ɪ'luː.sɪv/ (adjective): Difficult to find catch or achieve.



6. **Manipulates** /mə'nɪp.jʊ.leɪts/ (verb): Controls or influences something in a skilful manner.

Comprehension Questions

Multiple Choice

1. Which group of cyber criminals is suspected of targeting UK retailers?
Option: Black Widow
Option: Scattered Spider
Option: Venomous Serpent
Option: Pouncing Panther
2. Which platforms do cybercriminals associated with Scattered Spider often use to coordinate?
Option: Facebook and Instagram
Option: Twitter and LinkedIn
Option: Discord and Telegram
Option: WhatsApp and Snapchat
3. What tool did the hackers use to execute ransomware incidents?
Option: TigerStrike
Option: DragonForce
Option: PhoenixClaw
Option: GriffinWing
4. Which institutions were mentioned in the article as being affected by the cyber attacks?
Option: Walmart and Target
Option: M&S, Co-op, and Harrods
Option: Apple and Google
Option: Amazon and eBay
5. What event marked the initiation of the wave of attacks on UK retailers?
Option: Christmas
Option: Halloween
Option: Easter
Option: New Year
6. How do cybercriminals associated with Scattered Spider often gain access to IT help desks?



- Option: Brute force attacks
- Option: Social engineering tactics
- Option: Phishing emails
- Option: SQL injection

True-False

7. The National Crime Agency (NCA) has never acknowledged the group Scattered Spider before this investigation.
8. The cybercriminal group Scattered Spider primarily communicates in languages other than English.
9. The identities of the hackers responsible for the attacks have been successfully determined.
10. Scattered Spider is known to manipulate IT help desks using technical vulnerabilities.
11. The cybercriminals linked to Scattered Spider mainly consist of older individuals with extensive hacking experience.
12. The NCA highlighted the urgency of capturing the culprits due to the minimal damage caused by the cyber attacks.

Gap-Fill

13. According to the article, the wave of cyber attacks on UK retailers resulted in the theft of private data belonging to _____.
14. Foster emphasized the importance of tracking down the _____ behind the cyber incidents.
15. The cybercriminal group Scattered Spider is composed primarily of younger individuals who often communicate through platforms like Discord and _____.
16. One former teen hacker highlighted the availability of hacking tools online, suggesting that even



inexperienced individuals may engage in cybersecurity breaches with relative _____.

17. The National Crime Agency (NCA) is exploring various facets of the cyber crime landscape while focusing on tracking the same _____.

18. The cyber criminals associated with Scattered Spider have been conducting attacks that have resulted in the suspension of online _____.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. Scattered Spider 2. Discord and Telegram 3. DragonForce 4. M&S, Co-op, and Harrods 5. Easter 6. Social engineering tactics

True-False: 7. False 8. False 9. False 10. False 11. False 12. False

Gap-Fill: 13. millions 14. culprits 15. Telegram 16. ease 17. leads 18. ordering

CATEGORY

1. Business - LEVEL5

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