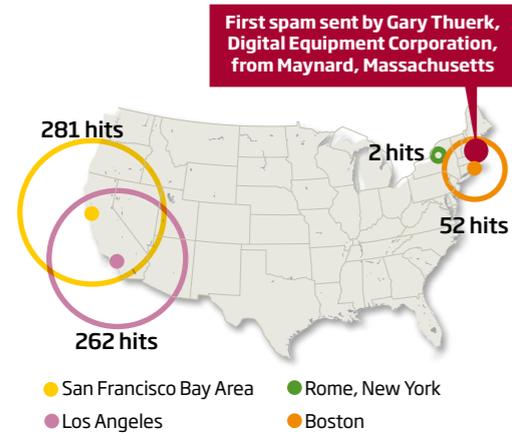


Spam, spam, and more spam

Originally the canned meat product that threatened to engulf a 1970 sketch from *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, spam now overruns the internet. With the rise of "botnets" - networks of "zombie" computers programmed to send out mass mailings without their owners' knowledge - something like 9 out of every 10 emails are now unsolicited. Spammers have been dealt a few blows in recent years, but as long as there is money to be made they are unlikely to go away anytime soon. **Jim Giles** assesses the state of spam

THE GEOGRAPHY OF SPAM IN 1978...

The first unsolicited mass email - an advertisement for a forthcoming sales event - was sent in May 1978. At the time, ARPANET, the forerunner of the internet, connected just a few academic and military labs in the US



...AND NOW

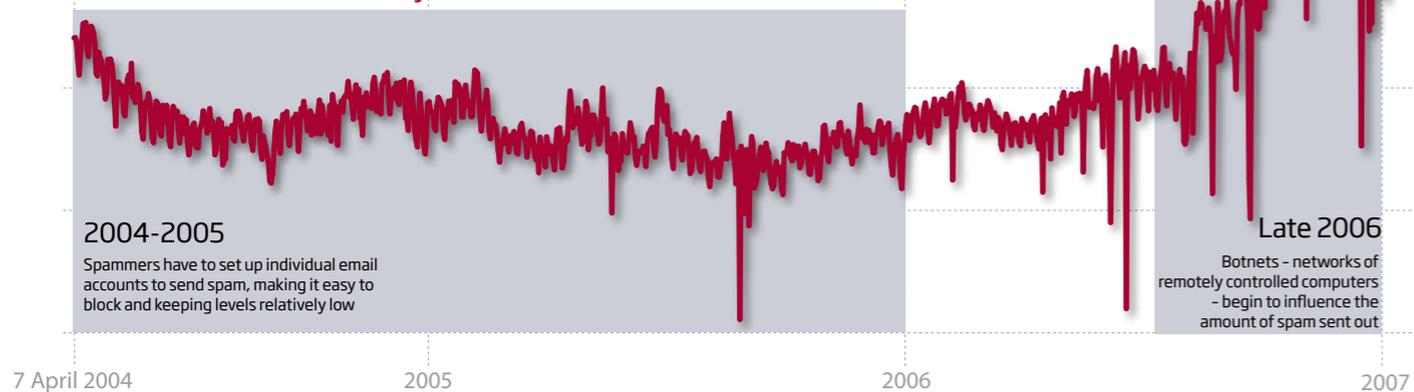


A global map of where spam comes from in 2009 looks rather like a map of internet connectivity - although anomalous hotspots in Brazil, central America, south-east Asia and southern Europe stand out

SOURCE: POSTINI

THE IRRESISTIBLE RISE OF SPAM

Based on an analysis by the Google-owned Postini service, which currently provides email security for some 18 million business users, processing upwards of 3 billion email connections a day



WHAT SPAM IS WORTH

An analysis of pharmaceutical spam emails sent out over one month in 2008 by just 1.5 per cent of one botnet called "Storm" reveals that few people click on the links - but that spam still makes money

SOURCE: COMMUNICATIONS OF THE ACM, VOL 52, P 99

35 MILLION SPAM EMAILS SENT

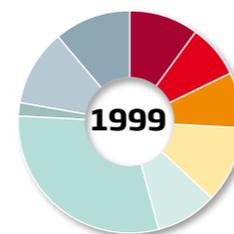
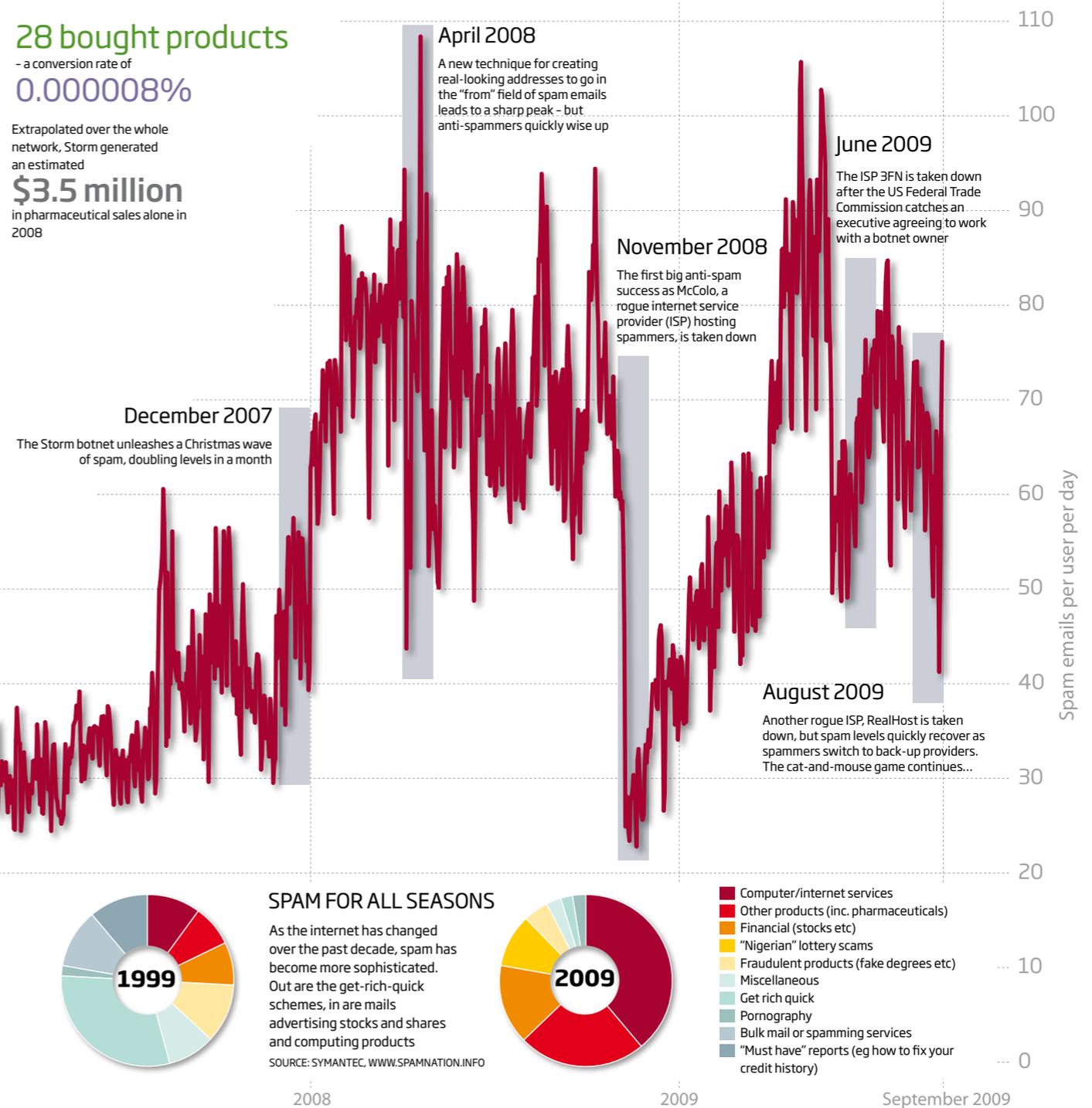


10,500 recipients clicked the link in the mail

28 bought products

- a conversion rate of 0.000008%

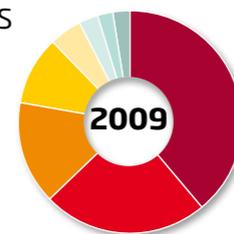
Extrapolated over the whole network, Storm generated an estimated \$3.5 million in pharmaceutical sales alone in 2008



SPAM FOR ALL SEASONS

As the internet has changed over the past decade, spam has become more sophisticated. Out are the get-rich-quick schemes, in are mails advertising stocks and shares and computing products

SOURCE: SYMANTEC, WWW.SPAMNATION.INFO



- Computer/internet services
- Other products (inc. pharmaceuticals)
- Financial (stocks etc)
- "Nigerian" lottery scams
- Fraudulent products (fake degrees etc)
- Miscellaneous
- Get rich quick
- Pornography
- Bulk mail or spamming services
- "Must have" reports (eg how to fix your credit history)