Microsoft was the most imitated brand for phishing attempts in Q4 2020

According to Check Point Research's new Brand Phishing Report, Microsoft was the most targeted brand by cybercriminals in Q4 2020. Forty-three percent of all brand phishing attempts related to the technology giant - up from 19% in Q3, as threat actors continued to try to capitalise on people working remotely during the second wave.
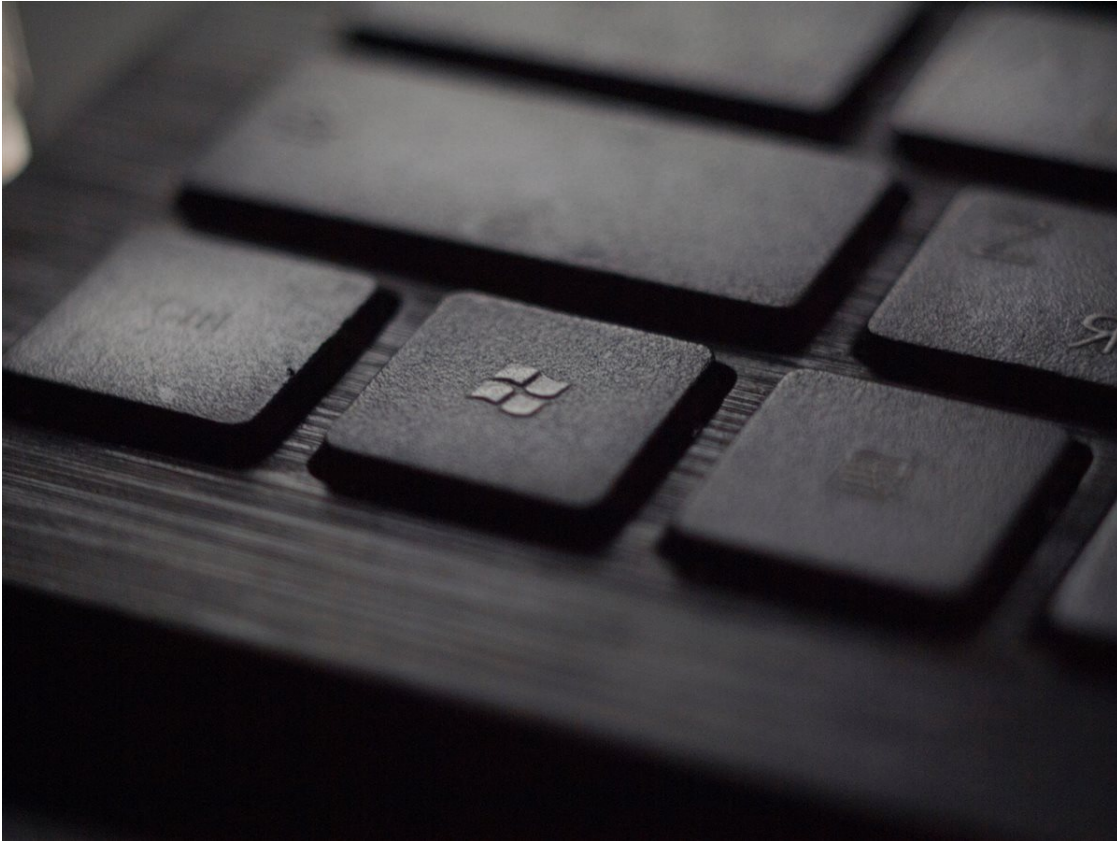

Photo by Tadas Sar on Unsplash

DHL maintained its position as the second most impersonated brand, with 18% of all phishing attempts related to it as criminals tried to take advantage of the online shopping season in November and December.

The most likely industry to be targeted by brand phishing was technology, followed by shipping and retail, showing how threat actors are using well-known brands in these sectors to trick users as they grapple with remote working technology and order goods online during peak shopping periods.

Maya Horowitz, director of threat intelligence, research and products at Check Point, says: "Our data clearly shows how they change their phishing tactics to increase their chances of success. As always, we encourage users to be cautious when divulging personal data and credentials to business applications and to think twice before opening email attachments or links, especially emails that claim to from companies, such as Microsoft or Google, that are most likely to be impersonated."

In a brand phishing attack, criminals try to imitate the official website of a well-known brand by using a similar domain name or URL and web-page design to the genuine site.

The link to the fake website can be sent to targeted individuals by email or text message, a user can be redirected during web browsing, or it may be triggered from a fraudulent mobile application. The fake website often contains a form intended to steal users' credentials, payment details or other personal information.

Top 10 phishing brands in Q4 2020

The top 10 brands are ranked by their overall appearance in brand phishing attempts:

1. Microsoft (related to 43% of all brand phishing attempts globally)
2. DHL - 18%
3. LinkedIn - 6%
4. Amazon - 5%
5. Rakuten - 4%
6. Ikea - 3%
7. Google - 2%
8. Paypal - 2%
9. Chase - 2%
10. Yahoo - 1%

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