

What are bots?

A bot is a computer programme designed to work automatically. It is mainly used to gather information on the Internet or perform repetitive jobs.

Like for every technology, there are two sides to bots as well. One of the typical beneficial uses of a bot is to gather information. Bots in such guises are called web crawlers, as cyber security solution major Norton has explained in its blog, adding that another good use is automatic interaction using instant messaging, instant relay chat or other web interfaces.

Dynamic interaction with websites is yet another way bots are used for positive purposes.

Norton defines a malicious bot as self-propagating malware that infects its host and connects back to a central server(s). Malicious bots can gather passwords, log keystrokes, obtain financial information, relay spam, and exploit back doors opened by viruses and worms, among other things. Bots have also come under scrutiny in relation to automated accounts on Twitter and Facebook. Efforts are being made to restrict these bots from spreading misinformation on the respective platforms.

Artificial intelligence-based bots are increasingly being used by organisations and entities to provide customer care, and sales and marketing services.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has said, "Bots are the new apps." Interestingly, according to technology research and advisory firm Gartner, by 2021 more than 50% of enterprises will be spending more per annum on bots and chatbot creations than traditional mobile app developments.

Some popular examples of bots are Apple's Siri, the Google Assistant, Amazon's Alexa and Microsoft's Cortana. But the list is getting longer. Closer home, some banks have also introduced AI-based chatbots that are capable of interacting with users and answering information-related queries.

According to Norton, symptoms such as a slow Internet or crashing of computer for no apparent reason, pop-up windows and advertisements appearing even when a web browser is not being used, friends and family receiving mails you did not send, or a fan going into "overdrive" when the device is idle may mean that your system is infected.

It is important to have a good anti-malware software. All softwares should be updated and system updates should not be ignored.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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