A REVIEW OF THE INNOVATIONS IN THE FIELD OF SMARTPHONE SECURITY

Panchuk O.R.

Кафедра інфокомунікаційної інженерії ім. В.В. Поповського,
Харківський національний університет радіоелектроніки,
Україна

E-mail: oleksandra.panchuk@nure.ua

Abstract

The article analyzes current trends and innovations in the field of smartphone security, focusing on implpementation of AI technologies into the process of threat detection, hardware-level security tendencies, Zero Trust Architecture and adopting blockchain technology in digital identity management.

There is no doubt that the industry has grown enormously over the years: back in the day, mobile phones were just a convenient way to call your friends or relatives, but fast forward to today – and evidently, our whole lives revolve around these small devices. They contain who we are, what we do, who we talk to, as well as where we were and where we will be. Needless to say, this information is sensitive, and nobody would want a stranger snooping around in their personal affairs. Breaches of sensitive data can lead to dire real-life consequences, including identity theft, blackmail, financial losses, or even threats to one's physical safety.

Thankfully, as the number of cyberthreats grows, new, more elaborate security measures get developed in order to mitigate them. In this article, the most prominent ones will be discussed to outline the direction in which the industry is moving.

The most obvious innovation whose popularity skyrocketed recently is artificial intelligence (AI), which is already being implemented as a progressively more robust way of proactively detecting threats. Instead of relying on pre-existing signatures, AI allows for a continuous analysis of user behavior in real time, creating a more tailored approach that is harder for malicious actors to circumvent: if unusual activity is detected (such as swiping gestures, application usage and credit card transactions), additional authentication measures are applied.

Another important development in this field is hardware-level security and Trusted Execution Environment (TEE) in particular, which enable secure code execution due to being isolated from the operating system of a device, drastically lowering the chance of unauthorized software interfering in key processes like encryption and biometric verification and obtaining unauthorized access to highly sensitive data, as well as ensuring integrity of the device upon startup (secure boot). A great example is Knox adopted by Samsung smartphones, which starts at the chip level, isolating the most sensitive operations, inspects kernel in real-time to detect inconsistencies if there are any, and employs strict principles when defining level of impact each process is allowed to make, and which information it is allowed to access. This constitutes a multi-faceted, reliable measure that works even if the main system is compromised.

Data isolation is performed on a software level as well within the widely adopted Zero Trust Architecture, crucial within the context of an enterprise with a popular "Bring Your Own Device" policy. The concept is self-explanatory, but its implementation has important nuance. One of its key principles is Virtual Mobile Workspace, a concept of creating a separate encrypted workspace without immediate and direct access to critical data "at rest". No data is stored locally, and when a session is closed, nothing sensitive remains on an employee's device, eliminating (or at least significantly reducing) risks.

Another point of concern in the industry is digital identity management. Nowadays most websites, applications and institutions require users to grant them access to sensitive data, and needless to say, relying on third-party providers for verification is a huge risk, which is evident by the number of data breaches that occurred at the companies that were once deemed trustworthy. One of the solutions to this issue is blockchain technology, a decentralized way for individuals to maintain more control of their personally identifiable information by storing it in digital wallets on their devices. Not only does it ensure no data can be accessed without a user's explicit consent, the record of access is also traceable and tamperproof, allowing for a robust way of checking authenticity of sensitive details.

After delving into the tendencies of smartphone security innovation, we can conclude that simple techniques are no longer enough for the modern level of threats. It is safe to assume that in the future, more elaborate steps will be added, and our approach will become more adaptive and dependent on real-time activity instead of pre-established data, which will be undoubtably harder for threat actors to overcome. One vulnerability will remain forever present, though – and it's the human factor. We should never disregard the value of spreading awareness among regular users and providing dedicated training to personnel.

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