Claims

1. A fraud detection system comprising:

a call switching unit configured to receiving an incoming call;

a call information extraction unit configured to processing the incoming call to extract call signalling information associated with the incoming call including a phone number of the calling party;

an age determination unit configured to determining an age of the phone number of the calling party;

a fraud scoring unit configured to determining a fraud score associated with the incoming call using the determined age, the fraud score indicating a likelihood that the incoming call is from a fraudulent caller;

wherein the call switching unit is configured to forward the incoming call to one of a number of different destinations based on the determined fraud score determined by the fraud scoring unit or forward the incoming call together with the determined fraud score to a remote destination, and

wherein the age determination unit is configured to determine an approximate time when the phone number was activated by a communications provider when determining the age of the phone number of the calling party, by:

determining, for each of a plurality of blocks of phone numbers allocated to the communications provider, an allocation date for each block indicating when the block of numbers was allocated to the communications provider;

searching one or more databases to identify when phone numbers in each block of numbers started to be used;

determining an allocation to activation pattern for the communications provider from the allocation date for each block of phone numbers and the identified time when phone numbers in each block started to be used; and

determining an activation date for the block of phone numbers that includes the phone number of the calling party using the allocation date for the block of telephone numbers and the determined allocation to activation pattern.

2. The fraud detection system of claim 1, wherein the age determination unit is configured to determine the age of the phone number of the calling party by calculating the difference in time between a current time and the approximate time that the phone number was activated.

3. The fraud detection system of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the age determination unit is configured to use digits from the extracted phone number of the calling party to look up a database to determine the age of the phone number.

4. The fraud detection system of any preceding claim, wherein the fraud determining unit is configured to determine a fraud score indicating a higher likelihood that the incoming call is from a fraudulent caller the younger the determined age of the phone number of the caller.

5. A fraud detection system comprising:

means for receiving an incoming call;

means for processing the incoming call to extract call signalling information associated with the incoming call, including a phone number of the calling party;

means for determining an age of the phone number of the calling party;

means for determining a fraud score associated with the incoming call using the determined age of the phone number, the fraud score indicating the likelihood that the incoming call is from a fraudulent caller; and

means for forwarding the incoming call to one of a number of different destinations based on the determined fraud score or means for forwarding the incoming call together with the determined fraud score to a remote destination; wherein the means for determining the age is configured to determine the approximate time when the phone number was activated by a communications provider, by:

determining, for each of a plurality of blocks of phone numbers allocated to the communications provider, an allocation date for each block indicating when the block of numbers was allocated to the communications provider;

searching one or more databases to identify when phone numbers in each block of numbers started to be used;

determining an allocation to activation pattern for the communications provider from the allocation date for each block of phone numbers and the identified time when phone numbers in each block started to be used; and

determining an activation date for the block of phone numbers that includes the phone number of the calling party using the allocation date for the block of telephone numbers and the determined allocation to activation pattern.

6. The fraud detection system of claim 5, wherein the means for determining the age is configured to determine the age of the phone number of the calling party by calculating

the difference in time between a current time and the approximate time that the phone number was activated.

7. The fraud detection system of any claim 5 or 6, wherein the means for determining the age is configured to use digits from the extracted phone number of the calling party to look up a database to determine the age of the phone number.

8. The fraud detection system of any of claims 5 to 7, wherein the means for determining a fraud score is configured to determine a fraud score indicating a higher likelihood that the incoming call is from a fraudulent caller the younger the determined age of the phone number of the caller.

9. A fraud detection method comprising:

receiving an incoming call;

processing the incoming call to extract call signalling information associated with the incoming call including a phone number of the calling party;

determining an age of the phone number of the calling party;

determining a fraud score associated with the incoming call using the determined age, the fraud score indicating a likelihood that the incoming call is from a fraudulent caller; and

forwarding the incoming call to one of a number of different destinations based on the determined fraud score or forwarding the incoming call together with the determined fraud score to a remote destination,

wherein the step of determining the age determines an approximate time when the phone number was activated by a communications provider, by:

determining, for each of a plurality of blocks of phone numbers allocated to the communications provider, an allocation date for each block indicating when the block of numbers was allocated to the communications provider;

searching one or more databases to identify when phone numbers in each block of numbers started to be used;

determining an allocation to activation pattern for the communications provider from the allocation date for each block of phone numbers and the identified time when phone numbers in each block started to be used; and

determining an activation date for the block of phone numbers that includes the phone number of the calling party using the allocation date for the block of telephone numbers and the determined allocation to activation pattern.

10. The fraud detection method of claim 9, wherein the step of determining the age determines the age of the phone number of the calling party by calculating the difference in time between a current time and the approximate time that the phone number was activated.

11. The fraud detection method of claim 9 or 10, wherein the step of determining the age uses digits from the extracted phone number of the calling party to look up a database to determine the age of the phone number.

12. The fraud detection method of any of claims 9 to 11, wherein the step of determining a fraud score determines a fraud score indicating a higher likelihood that the incoming call is from a fraudulent caller the younger the determined age of the phone number of the caller.

13. A computer program product comprising computer implementable instructions which, when run on a programmable computer device, cause the programmable computer device to perform the method of any of claims 9 to 12.