

CROYDON TRADING STANDARDS

COMMUNITY ALERT

Don't let fake AI images ruin your Christmas shopping

AI-generated (created using Artificial Intelligence) adverts on social media are becoming very common. Santander warned that last year, £16.7m was lost by its customers to purchase scams, where you buy something online that doesn't exist or doesn't meet expectations.

In one example, Which? discovered eight dodgy adverts on Facebook and Instagram promoting a fashion store called Mabel & Daisy.

At first, these ads looked like typical online shopping posts, but on closer inspection, we noticed that the images were a little too perfect and cartoonish.

Hundreds of Trustpilot reviews of the website linked to the ads detail receiving items unsatisfactory items. Reviewers also noted only being offered a percentage refund and being asked to send items back to China at their own expense.

How to spot and avoid scam ads

AI-generated content is getting harder to spot and is a popular tool for scammers, as it can be terrifyingly good at creating slick adverts and websites. If you're tempted by an online advert, do your research before parting with money. Watch out for:

- Images that look too perfect, cartoonish or overly airbrushed. Use an image search tool to see if it appears elsewhere. We used Google in our search and it quickly found that the images appeared elsewhere, which suggested the website wasn't genuine.
- Be wary of offers which sound unrealistic or too good to be true - flash sales with heavy discounts, offers for sold-out goods or bargain deals are all red flags.
- Website addresses that differ from what you'd expect. Look up the website's address on [who.is](https://www.who.is) to see when they were created. Newly created websites are almost always a red flag.
- Multiple reviews of the company claim that customers were scammed, received items that weren't as described, and were unable to get a refund.

You can report scam ads on Facebook and Instagram by clicking the three dots in the upper right-hand corner of the ad and selecting 'report'. If you lose any money to a scam, call your bank immediately using the number on the back of your bank card and report it to Report Fraud <https://www.reportfraud.police.uk/contact-us/> or call 0300 123 2040.

For the full article and to see some examples please follow this link:

<https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/dont-let-fake-ai-images-ruin-your-christmas-shopping-ao24t7m4wZ3>