



Number of fake goods sold online on the increase

Scammers are targeting users of auction sites and social media

Counterfeiters are turning away from traditional methods such as market stalls and shops, and are increasingly using the internet to sell fake goods. According to the 2012/13 Intellectual Property Office (IPO) Annual Report, around seven million people per month visit websites offering illegal content in the UK.

Consumers are being fooled by impressive looking online 'shops' which are apparently UK-based and sell products directly to consumers at discounted prices. Consumers are also being targeted by companies advertising products through social media, using multiple Facebook groups linking through to websites selling fake goods.

By buying fake goods online, consumers are helping to fund criminal activity but could also be risking their health.

Counterfeit products can be dangerous for your health. For example, fake sunglasses may not carry the correct UV protection for your eyes, and fake toothbrush heads could cause injuries to your mouth.

Trading Standards officers also warn of products that have been purchased by consumers directly from non-EU manufacturers, which are bypassing the normal safety checks that would occur if a UK wholesaler was bringing these products into the UK.

Fake goods are often sold at low and tempting prices. Don't buy something that's far below the recommended retail price, and always buy from reputable retailers. The differences between real and fake can often be very nuanced and can be difficult to tell just by looking at them.