

05 JUL 2021 / 13:52 H.
<span style="font-size:
10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">FOMCA has been receiving numerous complaints
from people who have been cheated when shopping via social media platforms such as
Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WeChat, WhatsApp, Telegram and others. Buying via social
media platforms is unadvisable.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;"><span
style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">The government is encouraging
Malaysians to venture into online businesses as the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted many
people due to job loss, while some have been forced to take no-pay leave.</p> <p
style="text-align: justify;"><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica,
sans-serif;">Although there are many sincere sellers who are selling their products such as
food, clothes, art and craft, etc, to make ends meet, nevertheless, there are many who are
using online platforms to cheat guileless consumers.</p> <p style="text-align:
justify;">The largest
number of reports were on non-delivery of goods purchased. Most of the complaints were
regarding sellers not delivering the promised goods, sellers were missing, ghosting,
etc.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;"><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial,
helvetica, sans-serif;">Most of the transactions ranged from RM30 to RM9,000. Once payments
were made, the scammers disappeared without a trace. Even the websites and phone numbers
were no longer available.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;"><span style="font-size:
10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">Besides being victims of online scams, many
consumers also claimed to be given the runaround and when it came to product delivery, with
some products taking more than a month to arrive.</p> <p style="text-align:
justify;">While many online
sellers are legitimate, social media scammers use the internet to rip off unsuspecting shoppers.
They will often ask consumers to wire transfer money upfront.</p> <p style="text-align:
justify;">As more
Malaysians turn to the internet to purchase goods and services, there is a pressing need for an
improved legal framework to protect rights of consumers.</p> <p style="text-align:
justify;">The Ministry of
Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs and Ministry of Communication and Multimedia
Commission should regulate online sellers who use social media to sell their products and
services.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;"><span style="font-size: 10pt; font-family:
arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">Many of them are not registered with the Companies Commission
of Malaysia. Consumers are urged not to trust any social media platform to do any
transaction.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;"><span style="font-size: 10pt;
font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">We also encourage consumers to report scams to the
ministries so people can be pre-warned about current scams, and the ministries can monitor
scam trends and disrupt them.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;"><span
style="font-size: 10pt; font-family: arial, helvetica, sans-serif;">Make sure to include details of
the scam contact, for example, email or screenshot. Always use legitimate online platforms so if
there are any disputes, they are traceable and refunds can be obtained, or a case can be filed

at a tribunal as there are proper channels for disputes.

Warning signs to look out for:

A product is advertised at an unbelievably low price or advertised to have amazing benefits or features that sound too good to be true. Some advertisements will coax consumers to buy as the items are limited, or push consumers to grab the offer within a stipulated date, which is often immediate, leaving consumers no time to check on the sellers.

The other party insists on immediate payment or payment via electronic funds transfer, or wire service. They may insist that consumers pay up-front for vouchers before they can access a cheap deal or a give-away.

The social media-based store is new and selling products at very low prices. The store may have limited information about delivery and other policies.

AN online retailer that does not provide adequate information about privacy, terms and conditions of use, dispute resolution or contact details.

Protect yourself

Check if the website or social media page has a refund or returns policy, and that their policies sound fair. The better online shopping sites have detailed complaint or dispute handling processes in case something goes wrong.

When using retail websites, find out exactly who you are dealing with. If it is a Malaysian company, you are in a better position to sort out problems if something goes wrong.

When making online payments, only pay for items using a secure payment service look for a URL starting with https and a closed padlock symbol or a payment provider such as PayPal. Think twice before using virtual currencies such as bitcoin they do not have the same protections as other transaction methods, so you cannot get your money back once you have sent it.

Avoid any arrangements with strangers who ask for up-front payment via money order, wire transfer, international funds transfer, pre-loaded card or electronic currency. It is rare to recover money sent this way.

Never send money or give credit card or online account details to anyone you do not know or trust.

Check if the sellers are blacklisted via <https://ccid.rmp.gov.my/semakmule>

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Source: <https://www.thesundaily.my/home/be-wary-of-shopping-via-social-media-platforms-GA8031976>

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