

Warning about fake dress websites

Beware websites posing as UK-based businesses, selling poor quality dresses at knockdown prices. You should be cautious when buying online and do your research before making any payment. A bargain that seems too good to be true probably is.

Shopping online

With wedding season now well upon us, [shopping](#) for the perfect dress, mother of the bride, or guest outfit may lead many to search online for that 'something special'.

[Trading Standards Service NI](#) has received a number of complaints from people who have been left out of pocket by what appear to be UK-based, professional occasion wear stockists.

They have bought items from a website ending in '.co.uk' and having what appeared to be a registered UK business address.

Expecting the glamour and quality depicted by the trader, they were all left dismayed on receiving an ill-fitting reproduction with only a passing resemblance to the clothing advertised.

On attempting to return the item, the traders often refuse to acknowledge the poor quality or provide any redress.

In addition to this, some people have then faced an unexpected customs bill to import the item from China.

A '.co.uk' website address and a UK geographic address guarantees nothing. A trader can be based anywhere in the world and, as such, will have no intention of giving people their right to a 14 day 'cool-off' period when buying online from UK or EU-based websites.

What to do

What appear to be genuine, professional websites frequently use images taken from other internet suppliers.

If dealing with an unfamiliar website, do a simple Google search of the trader's name and website address along with the word 'review' or 'scam'. This can return any poor or negative reviews left by others who have experienced unsatisfactory service or, worse, been scammed out of their money.

When buying anything online, use a secure method of payment. Using a credit or debit card may provide you with more protection.

Don't pay by money transfer.

If you think you need more advice on this, or on any other consumer-related matter, contact [Consumerline online](#) or on 0300 123 6262.

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