



The Great Car Boot Sale in the Sky!

In just a few years, the Internet has created a vast new super-store for consumers to browse at will, in the comfort of their own homes, any time they choose. It offers retailers and brands an ever-expanding market for their goods. **Over £30billion** was spent online by UK consumers in 2006 and **over 20%** of all retail sales in the UK so far this year have been made online.

But with this great opportunity comes equally great dangers, one of which is the exponential growth of the trade in fakes in cyberspace. In a single day last summer (2006) 15 brand owners removed over £60,000-worth of fake goods and closed down nearly 5000 auction sites on eBay alone, for selling fake versions of their products.

Counterfeiters love the Internet, for its speed, its reach and its anonymity.



Beware of imitation - especially in cyberspace!

Impossible to regulate and police effectively, Internet auction sites and traders offer consumers endless choice, and a huge market in fakes, sight unseen.

The main target used to be luxury goods, but now almost every kind of product you can think of is being faked, many of which we buy, in good faith, on a daily basis. An increasingly sinister threat is also posed by online sales of pharmaceuticals, bypassing the strictly regulated supply chain via chemists and GPs.

Currently, the fake products most frequently sold online are clothing, software and computer games, car parts, electrical goods, jewellery and other luxury items. Most genuine brands do not sell their goods via auction sites, and you risk receiving a fake, or nothing at all. We frequently hear from buyers that, when the item they purchased in good faith arrives, and turns out to be fake, it's impossible to find the seller, or obtain a refund.



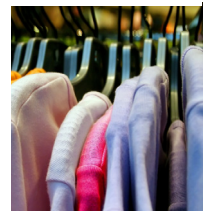
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Shoppers Must Beware!

Online sellers can be based anywhere in the world. Although law enforcement is beginning to grapple with this monster spawned in cyberspace, it is still all too easy for a seller to disappear completely.

Sophisticated technology is developing, which can make a start tracking criminals and their assets on a global basis. But shoppers must beware when they purchase any goods online - not just via auction sites such as eBay, but also from online retail websites and trade bulletin boards, such as alibaba.com, eclaza.com, ec21.com etc.



Example: In July 2007, Bosch took action in China against the makers of fake versions of their Xenon car headlights. As of early October 2007, the fakes were still on the market in the UK via auctions on the eBay website, some actually described as coming from China, and despite complaints by consumers to eBay. These sales, of a safety critical product, continue as we go to press.



SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BE SAFE ONLINE?

Don't learn the hard way!

Visit www.getsafeonline.org - this is a joint government and business sponsored website with excellent advice on all aspects of Internet use, including shopping.



Follow the procedures offered by particular websites for reporting problems. For example, visit eBay's Safety Centre.



Notify your local authority's trading standards department - your fake seller may be a repeat offender, who can be linked to other offences already reported; it all helps to build up a picture of criminal activity.

