

With the fast-growing technology that is taking place currently, the Internet has become a tool for consumers to gather information, make purchases at any time, compare prices and above all, save all the hustle and bustle of the city from going through the bad jam just to get to a shopping mall. It is undeniable to say that the number of online shoppers is steadily increasing and will continue to increase with the increasing number of computers and the availability of Wifi, hotspots and broadband. Thus emerges the group called e-consumers. The good thing here about online shopping is that besides comparing prices and avoiding the jams, it allows consumers to have more choices offered by online retailers. Not just within Malaysia, but also the opportunity of purchasing goods outside of the country with great discounts. Besides that, who would not be happy to get the items ordered to be delivered right at our doorstep? Though so far it appears to be that there are many good reasons allowing consumers to shop online, however the other side of the coin says otherwise. There are, however, risks associated with online shopping and you need to take care with what you are buying, from whom, and how you pay for your purchases which are still unknown to many out there. The National Consumer Complaints Centre (NCCC) has received just too many complaints back to back from 2014 to 2015 on the e-commerce sector and this has topped the complaints compared to the other 23 sectors. In 2014, the total complaints received were 7,641 with total loss amounting to RM2 million, and in 2015, the total complaints were 7,692 with losses amounting to RM4 million. Compared to 2014, the number of complaint has increased in 2015, which indicates that not only are people shifting from the traditional shopping method to online shopping, but that there is a need for consumers to be vigilant when buying goods online. The top complaints that we have received are on non-delivery of goods purchased. Despite the fact that the retailer has given a time line of the delivery which is usually in the span of two (2) weeks, to the complainant's dismay, the product was not delivered and some were delivered at a much later date. Product quality has been compromised and the complainant being cheated by receiving fake equipment and faulty products and being unable to get a refund from the merchant has been the common trend we have been receiving in NCCC.

**Tips on avoiding scams**

**Here are some tips on avoiding online shopping scams:**

- Avoid buying products advertised on websites that do not give a clear description of their products;
- Ensure that the company is registered before buying. you can verify the business address or business licence number with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM);
- Read and understand the terms and conditions of purchase - whether you can return the goods within the span of how many days;
- Don't forget to check and inspect your goods as soon as they arrive, and if you find out that there is a problem, do notify the seller immediately;
- Opt for cash on delivery;
- If the price offered was too low, there can be a possibility that the seller does not have the items or the online retailer is trying to sell you a fake item. You need to know about the latest market price of the item that you want to buy;
- Do not be afraid to ask common questions before you decide to buy.

The rapid increase of e-commerce needs support from the law in order to build trust and confidence among the consumers and it needs to keep up with the changes in technology to suit modern business practices. The regulators need to be strict in handling bogus merchants by either revoking their licences and or shutting down their websites based on the number of complaints received against the particular company. While there are legitimate companies and individuals who are honest in trying to sell their products to the consumers, on the other hand, there are still many online retailers out there who are just waiting to trap the

innocent buyers. Whichever way one look at it, it important to safeguard ourselves and to practice some simple guidelines as mentioned above in order to avoid being cheated online.<br /><br />If you are facing the same problem or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact NCCC at [www.nccc.org.my](http://www.nccc.org.my) or [myaduan@nccc.org.my](mailto:myaduan@nccc.org.my) / 03-78769000 or [shabana.naseer@nccc.org.my](mailto:shabana.naseer@nccc.org.my)</p> <p>SHABANA NASEER</p> <p>Senior Manager, legal and policy,(Fomca/NCCC).<br />Source: Malaysiakini / 25 August 2016</p>