

Martin Lewis has told MPs how people's lives were being "destroyed" by fraudsters using his image in scam online advertisements.

The consumer champion was visibly emotional as he detailed the fates suffered by several scam victims, including a woman suffering from cancer who lost thousands of pounds earmarked for her granddaughter's wedding after seeing an ad falsely claiming to be endorsed by Lewis.

"She said: 'It's Martin sponsoring it, it must be all right,'" Lewis told the draft online safety bill joint committee on Monday. "It was a scam, and she lost tens of thousands. She lost £15,000 trying to get back the money initially lost."

Lewis, 49, has long campaigned against bogus ads using his face to lure users and wants tech giants to be held responsible under new laws. User-generated content on a wide range of areas such as terrorism and child sexual exploitation are set to be covered by the online safety bill, but scam ads are not.

Lewis told MPs he had to sue for defamation to force [Facebook](#) into action, a move that eventually led the platform to donate £3m to Citizens Advice and create a new specialist scam advertisement reporting tool for the UK.

While progress has been made, he said, not nearly enough has been done to stamp the problem out.

"This isn't all vulnerable people, this is solicitors and university lecturers and accountants and people who get trapped into it," he said.

"This is a crime which you can virtually get away with it, with impunity, in this country – nobody is, or very few people are, prosecuted for this type of fraud.

"It is an easy way to make money – that is not a recommendation to anyone – but that's the truth of what is going on out there."

He continued: "If you are making billions of pounds from advertising, and you do not have good enough technology to stop scam adverts that destroy people's lives and potentially their health, with the diet pills, then you're going to have to pay human beings to pre-moderate them.

"We should be very careful not to allow them to set the narrative that this must be a technological solution.

"I don't give two hoots whether it's a technological solution or a manual solution, I just would like to see a solution."

Lewis also said that "if Boris Johnson was as trusted as me, so that he appeared in scam adverts as often as I do, I wouldn't be having [to do] this because the first thing that would have been in this bill is

regulation of scam adverts”.

MPs and peers also heard testimony from [Facebook whistleblower Sophie Zhang](#), who revealed this year that the company had failed to combat political manipulation campaigns.

Zhang said units such as Facebook’s civic integrity team, which had focused on monitoring interference in elections before it was disbanded, were “chronically under-resourced”.

Describing this as a “statement on the company’s priorities,” she added: “You don’t hear about the ads marketing team at Facebook being chronically under-resourced, for instance.”

Source: [Lives destroyed by scammers using my image, Martin Lewis tells MPs](#)