# Deepfake scam uses UK news presenters to promote illegal gambling apps



A recent discovery has revealed a sophisticated deepfake scam exploiting prominent UK news personalities to promote illegal gambling apps, prompting investigations by both Apple and the UK Gambling Commission. The scam employs artificial intelligence to create manipulated videos featuring well-known reporters and even Apple’s CEO, designed to deceive viewers into downloading illegal mobile gambling games.

The findings, reported by Sky News on Monday, highlight a deepfake ring that has co-opted trusted UK brands and notable media figures to lure users into illicit gambling activities via seemingly reputable channels. The fraudulent advertisements, disseminated predominantly on Facebook, misleadingly suggest lucrative rewards from playing the gambling apps.

Sky Science and Technology reporter Mickey Carroll provided insight into the scam by revealing how she had been impersonated through AI-modified video. In the deepfake advertisement, a version of Carroll, referred to under the false name “Olivia,” claims to have won a dream car and a cash prize of £500,000 (approximately $663,275) by engaging with the illegal gambling app. Carroll noted the ad’s extensive reach, saying it was “watched by at least a quarter of a million people on Facebook.”

The central figure in these deepfake ads was another AI-altered individual, a representation of Sky News presenter Matt Barbet. In the fabrications, Barbet’s image is used to promote a mobile game called Heavenly Sphere, falsely presenting it as an authorised app endorsed by Apple. A doctored statement attributed to Barbet included: “Apple CEO Tim Cook has unveiled an app that will earn money for anyone who has an iPhone.”

The counterfeit video featured an exchange between the AI-generated Barbet and Carroll, in which Carroll’s impersonation explains how easy it is to win money by simply downloading and playing the app. The video utilised footage from a previous Sky News segment in which Barbet and Carroll discussed an unrelated Apple lawsuit, repurposed by scammers to lend a veneer of legitimacy to their fraudulent claims.

Deepfake experts confirmed the authenticity of the manipulations. Dr Siwei Lyu, a professor at the University of Buffalo, verified that “all three faces in the video are lip-synced using AI models,” corroborating the sophisticated use of AI in fabricating the content.

Dr Jessica Barker, Co-Founder of security firm Cygenta, commented on the scam’s methodology, noting that gambling scammers are increasingly targeting Facebook users based on their country by leveraging trusted journalists from national news organisations, including Sky. She described this as an “increasing trend” in online fraudulence.

The fact that these users were able to download such illegal applications on what is considered a secure platform like Apple’s App Store has led to a coordinated response from Apple’s law enforcement team and the UK Gambling Commission. Sky News reported the involvement of approximately 36 Facebook accounts involved in promoting these deepfake ads, which directed the majority of victims towards potentially harmful mobile gambling games.

The investigations seek to address the wider issue of AI-enabled deception used to facilitate illegal gambling and undermine consumer trust in digital platforms and media authenticity.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://news.sky.com/video/skys-tech-reporter-was-deepfaked-for-an-ai-powered-scam-so-she-investigated-13352599> - This article explains how Sky News journalists, including a tech reporter, were deepfaked for an AI-powered scam promoting illegal casinos. It also details the investigation that followed, highlighting the use of AI in creating sophisticated scams.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHIC6TliK9o> - This video elaborates on scammers using AI deepfakes of Sky News journalists to promote illegal casinos. It mentions the involvement of the Gambling Commission and the National Crime Agency in addressing these scams.
* <https://www.vegasslotsonline.com/news/2025/04/21/deepfake-video-of-apple-ceo-uk-reporters-promoting-gambling-app-prompts-probe> - This news piece reports on an investigation prompted by a deepfake video featuring Apple CEO Tim Cook promoting an illegal gambling site. It highlights the concern among regulatory bodies such as Apple and the UK Gambling Commission.
* <https://www.asa.org.uk/news/a-year-in-scams-2024-update-on-scam-ad-alert-system.html> - This update from the ASA discusses the increasing use of AI and deepfakes in scams, providing context for the evolving methods used by scammers to deceive the public.
* <https://www.fincen.gov/sites/default/files/sar_report/sar_tti_22.pdf> - Although not directly related to deepfakes, this document from FinCEN highlights the role of financial tracking in uncovering and prosecuting fraudulent activities, which can be relevant in the broader context of financial crimes facilitated by deepfake scams.