

viralmagazine.it

A right-leaning site that has published false and misleading content on the 2020 coronavirus outbreak and other topics and that does not reveal its ownership or editorial leadership.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 7.5/100

Ownership and Financing

The site does not disclose its ownership. The domain was registered in May 2019 by Salvatore Mantice, who is identified as the “data protection officer” on the site’s Privacy Policy page. The site appears to be headquartered in Bali, Indonesia. In May 2020, Mantice told NewsGuard that he founded the site and then “gave it to people close to him” (“l’ho ceduto a persone a me care”), whom he did not identify.

The site derives revenues from advertising.

Content

ViralMagazine.it describes itself as “a viral news portal that leaves you breathless” (“un portale di notizie virali che ti faranno rimanere senza fiato”). Content is organized in sections including News, Health and Wellbeing (Salute e benessere), Curiosity (Curiosità), Food (Cucina), and (Viral News) Notizie Virali.

Typical articles published on the site have run under headlines including “The best cure in the world is for free: it’s called ‘Sea’” (“La miglior cura al mondo è gratis: si chiama ‘MARE’”); “Fat women are smarter than skinny women” (“Le donne in carne sono più intelligenti di quelle magre”); and “Coronavirus, doctor from Bergamo: ‘In hospitals we are like in war’” (“Corona virus, medico di Bergamo ‘Negli ospedali stiamo come in guerra’”).

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who’s in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Credibility

Articles on ViralMagazine.it are generally unsourced and often contain false and unproven claims, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, a February 2020 article headlined “Chinese researcher from the Faculty of Medical Sciences reveals the sad truth about Coronavirus” (“Ricercatrice Cinese della Facoltà di Scienze mediche rivela la triste verità sul Coronavirus”) falsely claimed that hot lemon can cure the coronavirus. According to the article, “Hot lemon can kill the proliferation of this virus in our body” (“Il limone caldo può uccidere la proliferazione di questo virus nel nostro organismo”).

There is no evidence that lemon can cure the 2020 coronavirus. Both the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization have stated that there is currently no known cure for the strain of coronavirus responsible for the 2020 outbreak.

In May 2020, this article was deleted from the site with no notice to readers, after NewsGuard mentioned the article in a report about “super-spreaders” of false claims about COVID-19 on Facebook.

Another February 2020, headlined “Coronavirus, doctor confesses: the government forbids us to test migrants on ships of NGOs” (“Coronavirus, medico confessa: il Governo ci impedisce di fare i tamponi ai migranti sulle ONG”), claimed that “the [Italian] Government is preventing tests from being made on migrants” (“il Governo sta impedendo che vengano effettuati dei tamponi sui migranti”). The article attributed the claim to Angelo Aliquò, the director of the provincial health authority of Ragusa.

There is no record of Aliquò saying that the government was preventing tests on migrants. The day before ViralMagazine.it published the article, Aliquò spoke about health prevention measures adopted by the Italian government in relation to migrants, but he did not say that migrants were not being tested.

This article was also deleted from the site, with no notice to readers, in May 2020.

Another April 2020 article was headlined “China first created the Coronavirus in a laboratory and spread it around the world, and now it has created the ‘Immuni’ app and the Government wants us to install it.” According to the article, “China created and hid the Coronavirus or covid19 with the collusion of the WHO. The virus originated in their Wuhan bacteriological weapons laboratory and spread worldwide” (“La Cina ha creato e nascosto il Coronavirus o covid19 con complice l’OMS. Il virus è nato nel loro laboratorio per armi batteriologiche di Wuhan e diffuso al mondo”).

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus was created in a lab. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” A study published in the journal Nature in February 2020 found the new virus’s genome is “96 percent identical” to a bat coronavirus.

In the same ViralMagazine.it article, the author stated: “Now, after the socio-economic disaster that the Communist dictatorship [China] has spread all over the world, it [China] created the ‘Immuni’ app, and it is trying to sell it all over the world” (“Adesso dopo il disastro socio-economico che la dittatura Comunista ha diffuso in tutto il mondo, ha creato l’app Immuni e sta cercando di venderla in tutto il mondo”).

Immuni is the app that the Italian Government is planning to use to track the spread of Covid-19. It was created by Bending Spoons, a company based in Milan, and is not a Chinese product, as the article claimed. The company’s CEO, Luca Ferrari, told Corriere della Sera on April 23, 2020, that only “About 2% of the company's shares are held by NUO Capital, a fund managed by Italians that operates with Chinese capital” (“Circa il 2% delle azioni della società sono di NUO Capital, fondo gestito da italiani che opera con capitali cinesi”), adding that “About 90% of the voting rights are in the hands of the founders, who elect the board of directors [...] and NUO Capital cannot determine any decisions” (“circa il 90% dei diritti di voto è in mano ai fondatori, che eleggono il cda [...] e NUO Capital non può determinare minimamente le decisioni”).

An unsourced July 2019 article, headlined “Walnuts: fruits full of quality” (“Noci: frutti pieni di qualità”), claimed that walnuts help fight cancer. According to the article, “There are powerful bioactive compounds. Like omega 3, phytosterols, and antioxidants. According to research, they have been shown to cure and prevent any cancer cells” (“Sono presenti, potenti composti bioattivi. Come gli omega 3, fitosteroli, ed antiossidanti. Che grazie a delle ricerche, hanno dimostrato di combattere e prevenire eventuali cellule antitumorali”).

Although there is some evidence from animal studies that nuts have an impact on cancer risk, there is no scientific evidence that walnuts can cure cancer in humans. The American Institute for Cancer Research has said that it “found evidence too limited to draw any conclusions about walnuts – or any nuts – and cancer risk”.

Because ViralMagazine.it regularly publishes inaccurate or unsubstantiated health claims, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

Asked about the articles mentioned above, Mantice, the site's representative, told NewsGuard in a May 2020 telephone interview: "We simply take articles from other sites" ("Noi prendiamo gli articoli da altri siti"), adding that the site's writers "take the information from other blogs, sites, newspapers, or write the words of YouTube videos" ("pigliano informazioni da altri blog, da altri siti, a volte dagli stessi giornali, o persino a volte riportano esattamente le parole di video presi da YouTube"), he concluded.

Asked if the site tries to verify the information provided by other sources, Mantice stated: "We do not have the means to go and check if a news is really true or false" ("noi non abbiamo i mezzi per andare a verificare se realmente quella notizia è vera o è falsa").

ViralMagazine.it does not disclose its right-leaning perspective and does not have an opinion section. Nevertheless, the site regularly inserts opinion into its coverage, generally supporting the League's leader Matteo Salvini's anti-immigration agenda.

For example, a March 2020 article labeled as News criticized Italian senator Emma Bonino, leader of the social-liberal political party +Europa, stating, "You should be caring about Italians, who provided you a salary even though you have never worked in your entire life. Think about Italian people, not about asylum seekers." ("Pensa all'Italia che ti ha mantenuta una vita senza che tu abbia mai lavorato. Pensa ai tuoi connazionali non ai richiedenti asilo").

In another March 2020 article labeled as Viral News, the author stated, "Unfortunately, more and more migrants arrive in our country to live off us." ("Purtroppo sempre più migranti arrivano nel nostro Paese per farsi mantenere").

Because ViralMagazine.it regularly inserts opinions in articles presented as news, without disclosing its right-leaning agenda, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Asked about the site's political orientation Mantice told NewsGuard: "We tend to report the news that generates more traffic. At the moment, the center-right is going well in Italy, and there is some criticism against the current government, so we tend to align our views to the most commonly shared views" ("Le notizie che fanno più letture, tendenzialmente le riportiamo. Ad oggi in Italia

va forte il centro-destra, e c'è un po' di accanimento sul governo attuale, per cui tendenzialmente cerchiamo di allinearci a quello che è il pensiero collettivo”).

Mantice added he plans to introduce an opinion section to host opinionated content.

ViralMagazine.it does not articulate a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

Asked about the site's approach to corrections, Mantice stated that the site corrects errors, but without notifying readers. This does not meet NewsGuard's standard for publishing corrections in a transparent manner.

Transparency

The site does not provide information on its ownership or editorial leadership.

Articles generally do not provide the name of the writer, and the site does not provide information about its content creators.

Asked about the site's lack of transparency regarding its ownership, editorial leadership, and content creators, Mantice told NewsGuard he plans to add this information to the site.

On the Contact Us page, the site provides a general email address, a telephone number, and a postal address for the site's headquarters in Bali, Indonesia.

Advertisements are distinguished from editorial content.

History

The domain was first registered in May 2019.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on May 7, 2020, with new comments from the site. Earlier, on May 1, 2020, the label was updated with new examples of content related to COVID-19.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and Financing

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Transparency

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History

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