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Coronavirus and fake news, Facebook "stops" 9 of the 10 pages that have spread fake news in Italy

After the publication of the NewsGuard research, some of the pages - which reached over 5 million users - were made unavailable by the social network

by Davide Casati and Martina Pennisi



Nine of the 10 Facebook pages listed as "superdiffusers" of fake coronavirus news in Italy [in a report published by NewsGuard](#) are no longer active. The stop was determined by Facebook, after the publication of the report by the US company [that deals with assessing the reliability of information sites](#).

The report indicated that, despite [Facebook's commitment](#), on the social network some pages capable of reaching over five million users hosted articles containing false (and in some cases dangerous) claims about the coronavirus taken from two sites (FanMagazine.it and ViralMagazine.it). The pages, in their description, communicated users to deal with anything else (from aphorisms to children's stories); Facebook had in no way reported to users how misleading or incorrect the content posted on the coronavirus was.

A few hours after the publication of the report, the only page that remained active among those that spread that content is "In the heart of women". For 6 pages, Facebook shows a message indicating how they may have been removed; for three others, it refers to "temporarily unavailable" content.

According to what was told to NewsGuard by the owners of FanMagazine and ViralMagazine, their pages have been "darkened" without Facebook having sent any communication.



"What we are witnessing in recent months, regarding online disinformation, confirms how useful the 'pre-bunking' is," explains Virginia Padovese, NewsGuard analyst and co-author of the [report on Italy](#). "From the information that NewsGuard has collected by analyzing thousands of sites, it emerges that the disinformation on COVID-19 is mainly published by sites that already published disinformation in the past, and were already unreliable to our analysis. If readers had been able to identify those sources as unreliable perhaps they could have chosen to browse elsewhere while looking for information on the pandemic. To indicate to readers if a source is generally unreliable means to help them to be careful of what they read and to choose carefully how and where to inquire ».

Il Corriere has a newsletter on coronavirus and phase 2. It's free, sign up [here](#)



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