

# Google moves against notorious spam news website

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Google seems to have stopped showing search results for a notorious spam news website called *BNN Breaking*.



Source: [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com)

Last week [GroundUp published](#) a article describing how *BNN* was republishing articles written by other publications, including *GroundUp*, *Limpopo Mirror* and *Eyewitness News*, after rewriting them using chatbots like ChatGPT, and failing to credit the actual authors or publishers. This is a breach of copyright.

According to Wikipedia, [BNN](#) is based in Hong Kong and is owned by American businessman [Gurbaksh Chahal](#). It has nothing to do with *BNN Bloomberg*, a legitimate Canadian news site. *BNN*'s stories frequently contain errors typical of those made by chatbots. Stories from *BNN* often appear higher in Google Search results than the original genuine articles. Our concerns were initially prompted by searching "Vhembe" in Google News. Vhembe is the area covered by *Limpopo Mirror*, a legitimate news publication that often works with *GroundUp*.

In February a *BNN* story that was a plagiarised, rewritten version of a story of [Lottery corruption](#) that *GroundUp* and *Limpopo Mirror* co-published appeared high in Google's results, far above our story. Later, another *BNN* story that appeared to be a rewrite of an *Eyewitness News* article appeared at the top of the results.

*BNN's* business model appears to depend on Google Search ranking its articles high. This attracts readers, who then click articles on *BNN* that host Google Ads. Websites are remunerated by Google Ads based on the number of times adverts are viewed. Even more money is earned by websites when the adverts they host are clicked.



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Nathan Geffen and Anton van Zyl 8 Mar 2024



A Google representative assured us that the Google Search algorithm does not privilege sites that run Google Ads. *BNN's* model takes views away from the legitimate websites that published the original articles that *BNN* plagiarises. For news sites that depend on advertising, this amounts to lost revenue. As we pointed out in last week's article, Google Search is currently the biggest driver of traffic to many news websites.

Last week Google [stated](#) that it was taking steps to crack down on what it calls spam sites. We expressed scepticism because *BNN Breaking* articles continued to show up, but it now appears Google has made good on its commitment.

A search of "BNN Breaking News" from Google's main search page now only shows the BNN Breaking website very far down.

Searching "BNN Breaking News" from the Google News front page doesn't show any links to BNN Breaking's website.

Searching "Vhembe" no longer brings up BNN stories.

It will be interesting to see if Google manages to successfully filter out sites like BNN in the future. Unfortunately, it has become extremely easy to replicate BNN's spam model.

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