

Viral app, Vero gets backlash over CEO's ties to Russia

By  Juanita Pienaar

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A new app (or maybe not so new, it's been around [since 2015](#)) has received much attention over the last week when it became the top downloaded app in Apple's app store.



© [Vero](#).

Vero is what it's called and it claims to be the 'true social'. What makes it different from all the other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is that it has no ads and no algorithm, so you'll be able to see posts chronologically on your feed. You can also choose who sees your content as the app allows you to cluster your content in groups such as friends, acquaintances and followers.

So how does it make money if no ads are allowed? Previously the app's administrators announced that its first million users will get free access and that it would later introduce a subscription fee. But after it recently passed the million-user mark, it announced that it would extend its "free for life" offer until further notice.

“ In light of the extraordinary demand for Vero, we're extending our free for life offer. <https://t.co/g3QpjGlyEj>— Vero (@verotruesocial) [February 28, 2018](#) ”

Frustrated with other social media networks

The app was developed by Ayman Hariri, a Lebanese billionaire who is the son of the former prime minister of Lebanon, Rafic Hariri, according to [The Daily Beast](#). Hariri told [CNBC](#) he founded Vero as he was frustrated with other social media networks.

“ When I did join existing social networks, I found the options for privacy were quite limited and difficult to understand, and also when I decided to get on and connect with a few of my friends, I noticed that their behaviour online was very different than their behaviour in the real world. ”

And so, the Vero [website](#) claims that "Vero is for anyone who loves anything enough to share it – and wants control over

who they share it with. Just like we do in real life."

However all the attention Vero is receiving has put immense pressure on its servers, causing technical difficulties and making it unusable for hours.

“ We apologize for the late update. We are scaling our servers to meet the increasing demand.

We appreciate your continued patience while we work to restore service.

— Vero (@verotruesocial) [February 26, 2018](#) ”

There were also concerns over its privacy policy that had users in a tailspin. In the meantime, Vero has announced that it has updated the [policy](#) to ease concerns raised.

“ All my artist friends may wanna checkout the TOS for [#vero](#) before posting any of your work. You basically give them rights to do anything they want with it, or your pictures of your kids or even your own face [pic.twitter.com/Z3klUrZn8o](#)— pixl (@pixl_art) [February 27, 2018](#) ”

“ It has come to our attention that some of the language in our Terms of Use and Privacy Policy has caused some confusion. ”

We have updated both to clarify.

We appreciate your trust!

— Vero (@verotruesocial) [February 23, 2018](#)

Links to Russia

It's not just the technical glitches and privacy issues that have caused users to lash out and delete the app. More controversially, users have turned their backs on the app due to Hariri's political past and his links to Russia.

According to [Women's Health](#), Vero has an all-Russian developer team and the Hariri family has been linked to Russian president Vladimir Putin. This is especially concerning since Russia has been accused of using social media and technology to interfere with American elections.



France's Macron vows fake news law, eyeing Russia

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“ If anyone else is about to pull their hair out trying to delete their [#vero](#) account because the ceo is a villain and their TOS are shady AF, here's how. pic.twitter.com/XzKHWWFqZp— Corrigan Vaughan 💎💎 (@nerdsrocket) [February 27, 2018](#) ”

Whether Vero will be able to persuade users to stay and continue to grow its numbers, is yet to be seen. Only time will tell if it has what it takes to take on the likes of social media giants, Instagram and Facebook.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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