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JUN 29, 2012, 4:31 PM

Mobile Ads Get Trickier to Spot

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By Quentin Fottrell



More advertising is creeping onto cellphones and tablets, experts say, but they're the kind of ads that pretend not to be ads at all.

Though Facebook has yet to generate "meaningful" mobile ad revenue, according to its IPO documents, Twitter now gets the majority of its income from mobile ads, [The Wall Street Journal reports](#). On Twitter, companies pay to have subjects show up atop a list of trending topics. Users may end up following brands without realizing or caring that they're reading an advertisement.

Sponsored tweets and trending hashtags are almost indistinguishable from regular tweets, so they're less likely to irritate social networkers, experts say. By contrast, Facebook tags profiles with sponsored stories that resemble old-fashioned banner ads, says Brent Hieggelke, chief marketing officer at mobile messaging company [Urban Airship](#). "Anything seen to invade the mobile space won't be tolerated," he says.

Making advertising seamless with the rest of the content may be away to overcome consumer resistance to mobile ads. Smartphones are the most intimate of all devices, says Chris Young, executive director of [The Protocol School of Washington](#). "People see their Smartphones as an extension of themselves," he says.

The fallout from its troubled IPO may also hamper Facebook's efforts to step up mobile advertising, experts say. "The public perception of Facebook is at an all time low," says Rick Singer, CEO of [GreatApps.com](#). Consumers braced for a deluge of mobile ads after Facebook's disappointing IPO, he says. Immediately after the IPO, the site dropped from No. 1 to No. 4 in the "[Customer Loyalty Engagement Index](#)," a measure of brand perception among 49,000 social networkers polled by marketing consultancy Brand Key. (Facebook and Twitter did not respond to requests for comments.)

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