Apple might appease antitrust concerns by suggesting third-party apps to new iPhone owners

Apple has been staring down the barrel of numerous antitrust investigations this past year, after app developers like Spotify and Rakuten accused the company of unfairly advantaging Apple's own apps ahead of theirs. But Apple is apparently working on a new feature that might address at least one of the common concerns, by proactively suggesting third-party apps (apps that Apple *doesn't* make) to iPhone and iPad users when they first set up their devices. Will Apple suggest Spotify alongside Apple Music? That could be on the table.

9to5Mac spotted the feature in the new iOS 14.3 beta, and it seems pretty clear from the accompanying text that the feature is designed to satisfy countries who take a dim view of Apple's current stance. "In compliance with regional legal requirements, continue to view available apps to download," reads part of the code, suggesting that it'll only be rolled out in regions where Apple feels compelled to do so.

Assuming Apple actually makes the feature a reality in a future version of iOS, it might not be enough to satisfy some of the companies that have spoken out against Apple, though. For one thing, the iPhone's default set of apps is only one place where, they argue, Apple gives itself an edge. Apple has also been accused of prioritizing its own content in search – though Apple says that's not true – and compared to changes to

search, a one-time attempt to recommend a small handful of apps to users who stick with the onboarding process wouldn’t make as much of an impact.

But Apple does seem to be making more than one such change this year; in iOS 14, it finally lets you set your own default browser and email apps — though it has run into a few bugs there.

Apple’s also fighting a somewhat different antitrust battle with Epic Games over *Fortnite*, and it’s been under fire for its stewardship over the App Store for a while. Recently, Apple changed some of its App Store rules to allow some of the kinds of apps that it had blocked or attempted to remove — when blocking them led to unwanted attention.

Apple didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

https://www.theverge.com/2020/11/12/21563168/apple-antitrust-third-party-app-setup