Apple pauses App Store gambling ads after developer outcry

On Tuesday, Apple announced that companies could advertise their apps on the store pages for other apps, putting their icon in the “you might also like” section. Almost immediately, developers started showing examples of ads for gambling apps being recommended under their apps.

As *MacRumors* reporter Joe Rossignol points out, Apple hasn’t clarified how long the pause would last, or if it’ll be making any policy changes based on how the initial rollout has gone down. It’s also unclear which other ad categories have been paused.

Apple’s rules for advertising on the App Store do list apps related to gambling, alcohol, dating, and the pharmaceutical and medical industry as “restricted,” meaning that there are special rules about where they can be shown. The limitations are mainly about laws instead of what’s tasteful or potentially harmful though; the site says gambling apps are “prohibited or limited in some countries and regions,” but doesn’t say anything about the audience they can be served to.

How Apple proceeds could be very important for the future of the iPhone. Reports have indicated that it’s planning on expanding ads outside the App Store, to apps like Maps, Podcasts, and Books. Imagine seeing a casino pop up when you search for addiction recovery centers, or erotic novels when you’re looking for books on dealing with a porn addiction.

The good news for Apple is that there are other companies that

have been working on this problem that it can borrow ideas from, if it’s not too proud to do so. Google, for example, lets you limit the number of ads you see about potentially sensitive topics like alcohol, gambling, dating, pregnancy, and weight loss. Apple talks a big game about how the App Store is a safe place to get software for your phone, and (despite the many ways it’s historically failed to prove that) it needs to maintain that appearance. But can it do that while also trying to show us ads whenever we open its apps?

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