

Evaluating Advertising Affiliations in Nigeria: Past and Present



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Abstract

The study sought to explore factors relating to foreign advertising agency affiliations in the Nigerian advertising sub-sector. The cost-based theory served as the theoretical foundation of the study which focuses on the bundling and unbundling of advertising campaigns with an advertiser or client choosing an advertising agency that handles both creative and media campaigns or giving the jobs to two different agencies for cost-effectiveness, while descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study included 600 advertising practitioners in the 80 advertising agencies under the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria including the 14 affiliated agencies and 66 non-affiliated peers and the sample size was 300 which was determined by using an Australian sample size calculator with a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 4. Multi-stage sampling techniques were adopted in the selection of the study's sample size of 300 from the parent population of 600 workers of both affiliated and non-affiliated agencies. Questionnaire, interviews, relevant business reports, and facility visits were used as instruments for data collection. Data obtained were analyzed using correlation, mean, percentages; frequency distribution, and Chi-square. A total of 300 copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents, and out of the 300 copies of the questionnaire 293 copies representing 97.66% were returned and found usable. Hypotheses were tested using Chi-square at a probability level of 0.05. Results indicate that billings, visibility leadership of CEOs, and quality and quantity of clients are the major factors that influence advertising agency affiliations in Nigeria, core manpower and strong foundation are some of the attributes that facilitate affiliations in Nigeria, international best practices, and improve work system are major factors that make Nigerian local agencies to seek foreign affiliates, affiliations expose the Nigerian local agencies to wider business opportunities and generate financial gains. The study recommends as follows: local advertising agencies in Nigeria should seize the opportunity of the prospects of affiliations to carry out in-depth communication research and training that can strengthen the advertising industry, local agencies in Nigeria should scrutinize critically the various philosophies of foreign advertising agencies before engaging in them, advertising laboratories should be established in all Nigerian universities for raising advertising practitioners.

Keywords: *Affiliation, Advertising Agencies, Foreign Affiliation*

Introduction

Advertising continues to grow along with other subsectors of the economy and a number of factors continue to shape the advertising business. One of which is the fast-changing

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nature of the media which has changed the advertising landscape. Others are aggressive initiatives and moves towards affiliations among local advertising agencies and self-examination by the advertising business, especially by the advertisers.

The advertising market in Nigeria consists of agencies with different foci and sizes, advertising agencies, media agencies, design bureaus, public relations agencies, new media, and below-the-line agencies. The advertising market in Nigeria has long historical developments after the country gained independence in 1960.

The advertising sector has become increasingly international and globalized with some Nigerian agencies having affiliations or partnerships with the foreign advertising agencies such as Lintas. Right from inception, Lintas had a foreign affiliation in 1928. It is worthy of note that in the 1990s it became fashionable among Nigerian agencies to be 'affiliated' and many new start-ups went out to aggressively court foreign agencies to be their partners..

Over the years foreign advertising agency affiliations have generated a lot of discourse among advertising practitioners as well as stakeholders and the industry regulators. The desirability or otherwise and the efficiency of affiliations in the Nigerian local markets formed the crux of this study. Generally, agency affiliations exist when one business controls or has the power to control another or when a third party or parties control or has the power to control both businesses. Control may arise through ownership, the management, or other relationships interactions between parties. In the interconnected world, advertising agencies are part and parcel of international business, hence some local advertising agencies are either fully, partially, or technically affiliated to the subsidiaries of the big four world's Global Marketing Communications Groups such as WPP, which is a British Marketing Giant that is the world's biggest marketing group which owns and controls four of the world's largest advertising agencies in JWT, Ogilvy & Mather, Young & Rubican, and Grey. Local advertising agencies and other service sectors in Nigeria also seek strategic business partnerships within and outside the shore of the Nigerian environment in the forms of consortia, affiliations, and alliances with a view to remaining strong in the competitive markets. While some local advertising agencies have gone for affiliations and succeeded others have failed. The credo among them is to think globally while acting locally.

Foreign advertising agency business affiliations have a long history in Nigeria with some local agencies having full or partial affiliations that are with equity or without equity. Affiliation is partnering or associating with an agency that is of world repute on the part of the local agencies and that this world group agency must be big or international in scope, and agreement between the international agency and its local branch partner pays both sides. Foreign advertising affiliation is basically when one agency ties itself up as an associate of a larger group mostly multinational groups for the purpose of rendering services to the multinational local clients of the affiliated agency based on country of practice. Affiliation is driven by many factors such as profits, closer supervision, and direction of the account of the local country. Furthermore, foreign advertising agency affiliation is an arrangement of local advertising agencies having partnership or working relationship agreement with international advertising agencies, or offshore agencies. There are also two types of advertising agency affiliation, namely; local and foreign affiliation. The local affiliation is yet to be embraced by many Nigerian advertising agencies which are where small advertising agencies are affiliated to bigger

agencies in the same country while foreign affiliation deals with local advertising agencies having affiliation with overseas advertising agencies.

There is a broad agreement amongst scholars that foreign advertising affiliations are the phenomenon of great theoretical and practical import but also there is a shortage of research examining the strategies of advertising agency affiliation including automatic transfer of businesses to the local affiliates, training and staff exchange programme as well as managing the cost of liability of foreignness. Similarly, affiliation is equally hindered by varied factors, and dealing with these threats to achieve the business objective becomes very crucial.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian advertising industry makes conscious and deliberate efforts towards achieving advertising objectives in the country with the aim of contributing to the growth of the economy through increasing profitability but the sector is oftentimes faced with a lot of critical issues and challenges such as high taxation, inadequate data bank, poor infrastructure, shortage of manpower, poor economy and lack of corporate governance. As a result, local advertising agencies have often come up with several strategic initiatives or approaches designed to serve the clients better. One of such approaches is the effort of the local agencies to seek foreign advertising agency affiliations. However, the factors that are involved in advertising agency affiliations in Nigeria and how affiliations work in the Nigerian advertising subsector form the crux of the study. The study, therefore, evaluated the factors relating to foreign advertising agency affiliations in the Nigerian advertising industry.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the factors relating to foreign advertising agency affiliations among local advertising agencies in Nigeria
2. To ascertain the major attributes that facilitate foreign advertising affiliations among the local advertising agencies in Nigeria
3. To determine those factors that militate against the foreign advertising affiliations among the local advertising agencies in Nigeria
4. To determine the major advantages derivable from foreign advertising affiliations among the local advertising agencies in Nigeria

Research Hypotheses

This study was guided by these hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Ho1: The rating on the necessity of foreign advertising affiliations is not affected by years of practice of advertising.

Hypothesis 2. Ho2: The rating on the necessity of foreign advertising affiliations is not affected by age.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is Lagos where most of the advertising agencies are based. In line with this, 80 advertising agencies that are officially registered with the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN) including all the affiliated and non-affiliated agencies constituted the scope of the study.

Literature Review

Firms or organizations adopt various strategies in order to remain competitive in an increasingly global market. Lewis (2000) states that some of the strategies adopted by firms are: strategic alliances, partnerships, affiliations, international coalitions, strategic networks, joint ventures, and consortia which involve the cooperation between two or more firms or agencies that pool their resources together to create a value proposition for their clients and themselves. Essentially, most times these strategies may extend beyond the shores of a country's borders or organization's market environment. According to Lewis, the major thrust for international or local business partnerships is to create synergy for the partners through sharing of resources and capabilities in the competitive market environment. Steinhilber (2008) notes that business alliances or partnerships have varied definitions and are agreements or arrangements between two or more parties to pursue a set of agreed-upon objectives while remaining independent organizations. An agreement amongst firms in which each commits resources to achieve a common set of objectives is also referred to as business affiliation. Organizations may form strategic alliances with a variety of players such as customers, suppliers, competitors, universities, and divisions of government. Through business alliances, companies or partners can improve competitive positioning, gain entry to new markets, supplement critical skills and share the risk or cost of major development projects.

Scholars such as Gonzalez (2001), Doz, and Hamel (1998,p.24) observe that "companies with more joint ventures, marketing, and manufacturing alliances, and other forms of partnerships, have higher market values than companies that do not form partnerships". The authors conclude that: In the connected economy, connections matter, but building business collaborations and making them work is not easy". Partnering well is a key core competence, and it is one that needs to be developed. Gonzalez (2001) notes that strategic business alliances are critical to organizations for a number of key reasons. According to Gonzalez, these reasons include: (i) Organic growth alone is insufficient for meeting organizations' required rate of growth, (ii) Speed to market is of the essence, and partnerships greatly improve speed to market, (iii) Complexity is increasing, and no one organization has the required total expertise to best serve the customer, (iv) Partnerships can defray rising research and development costs, (v) Alliances facilitate access to global markets. In the global economy, all boundaries are artificial and limitations self-imposed. Yet partnering carries with it huge risks. For example, as many as 70% of alliances fail while many business agreements are often terminated, amongst others. These risks can be mitigated by creating organizational competence in strategic alliances. To make alliances work, she reveals that organizations must develop a systematic, structured and disciplined process that involves planning, implementation, and evaluation. Advertising is a specialized service and has common characteristics with other service sectors that face increasingly complex and turbulent environments worldwide. The importance of the internationalization of advertising has increased exponentially. Located in a pivotal position between production and consumption, the advertising industry plays a key role in constituting the geographic boundaries of markets and in the internationalization of consumer culture.

The Nigerian advertising agencies are affiliated with overseas mega advertising agencies because globalization has forced them to do so, as globalization epitomizes the crossing of natural frontiers by goods and services, cultures, personnel, capital, and most importantly, technology. International advertising industry research has highlighted

several developments. Leslie, (1995, p.428) notes “more globalization of accounts, global or pan-regional media planning, cross-cultural research and, in some cases, global creative executions or themes have a great influence on advertising globally”. As a result, global clients are seen as instrumental to driving this behaviour as they seek international planning, account management, and implementation capability from agencies able to operate on a ‘one-stop’ basis in international markets. In addition to the international integration approach of international advertising, standardization and adaptation represent invaluable mechanisms. Betty (2003) revealed that affiliations improve the Kenya advertising industry and other sectors of the economy and that agencies in Kenya are varied; ranging from small, medium, and large agencies. The author said that advertising agencies seek strategic alliances to remain in a competitive world market. Other results of the study included; strategic capabilities for local agencies, positive changes related to professionalism, teamwork, and image. This result is consistent with theorized objectives related to prestige value, learning, and global tools. However, objectives that do not seem to be achieved include; improved profitability and cost reduction through better efficiencies. Unfortunately, one aspect that was lacking in the study is the economies of scale. This, therefore, means that after affiliations expected economies of scale are not realized in real terms. Emme (2006) examined whether affiliations harm or promote the local advertising agencies and the industry as well. It was seen that international advertising agencies and some local industry watchers were worried over the number of Nigerian advertising agencies’ profiles littering South Africa, Asia, Europe, and America with pleas for affiliations. Some local agencies do not structure their working relationships in such a way that the environmental, cultural, and social challenges are given top priority attention and the global agencies hardly recognize these liabilities in their approaches to doing business with the local affiliates. According to the author, this development poses a serious concern to the affiliation processes in the industry. However, the author revealed too that affiliations have positives; and they include; winning prestigious accounts, international best practices, financial resources, proprietary tools, technical supports, training and exposure, skills acquisition, creativity, increase in profits, billings and turnover rate. It was found that factors such as lack of trust, mutual respect, accountability, cultural, environmental, social, interference, capital flight, and pressure to control the local agencies arising from 51% equity share could hinder the affiliations system in Nigeria. There is a broad agreement amongst scholars that foreign advertising affiliations are phenomena of great theoretical and practical import. However, there exist some gaps in the above studies on affiliations and they include; management of liability of foreignness, nature and patterns of affiliations requirements, and the dissolution of affiliations or termination of affiliations pact. The study hopes to fill these identified gaps as its contribution to knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

The ‘cost-based theory of advertising and marketing has a relevant bearing on this research. This theory emerged from the theories of marketing formulated by D.S. Evans and M. Salinger in 2005. The theory sees advertising campaigns as consisting of two complementary service components, namely: creative (development and production of advertising messages), and the media (planning and buying media space and time to disseminate advertising messages to the target markets). The theory is used to explain

the bundling or unbundling of advertising agency services. According to this theory, the focus is on the behavior of the advertising agency rather than the advertiser, how the advertising agency is structured, and how specialization and compensation methods are affected by the increase in media prices relative to other costs. The theory rests on three key assumptions: contestability, the presence of scale and scope of economies in the production of advertising campaigns, and limited substitutability between the two main inputs to an advertising campaign, message, and the media.

In the bundling scenario, the advertiser pays the fixed information costs (costs of searching for an agency, learning about it, and maintaining the relationship) for an advertising campaign (account). While in the unbundling system, the production technology of an advertising campaign is identical in the bundled scenario. The advertiser must bear higher information costs to establish and organize relationships separately with both a media buying and a creative agency. In addition, an advertiser may incur coordination and integration costs for purchasing the two complementary inputs to an advertising campaign from separate firms. This theory says the advertiser must pay to duplicate fixed information costs when it purchases services for an account from two firms, as compared to the bundling case where only one input supplier is employed.

Design of the Study

The study used both descriptive and explanatory survey designs. The population of this study stood at 600 practitioners of affiliated and non-affiliated advertising agencies working in 80 selected local agencies. The sample size of this study stood at 300. This was determined by using the Dusick sample size calculator with the confidence level of 95% at a confident interval of 4 which is the range within which the proportion of the population falls. The major reason for this sample size is because the subject agencies are highly fragmented with different foci and sizes and as such affect the distribution of their workers. The methods for data collection in this study were interviews and questionnaire. Descriptive statistical methods were used such as frequency distribution, mean, percentage, Chi-square, and correlation.

Response Rate

A total of 300 copies of questionnaire were distributed to randomly chosen advertising practitioners in the 80 advertising agencies both affiliated and non-affiliated agencies that were drawn from the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria, which is the internal regulator of advertising agencies. The total copies of the questionnaire returned and found usable for the analysis were 293 copies. This represents a general return rate of 97.66% for affiliated and non-affiliated advertising agencies that constituted the advertising industry for the study.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the demographic data of the respondents showed that 157 of the respondents representing 53 % were between the ages of 32- 42. This indicates that advertising agencies sampled had able-bodied workers or members of staff who are in their prime years which helps the advertising industry significantly. This also means that majority of the respondents are within the prime age of active service and complete rigors to life endeavors. Also, the gender distribution showed that 288 or 98.3% were

male practitioners, indicating the fact that the industry is dominated by male practitioners or folks. In relation to the educational status or formal level of education, the result showed that 159 representing 54.3% had certificates ranging from HND to B.Sc. The result showed that there are more degree holders in the sample studied considering the fact that 54.3% of them possess degrees in different areas of study. This further showed that the industry is populated with workers that are educated. In the job experience, the result showed that 189 representing 64.5% had between 6- 10 years of work experience. The result showed that the industry has workers who are experienced in the job. The data also showed that 102 respondents or 34.8% were engaged in client services functions. Therefore, the result indicated that the majority of the sampled practitioners were client service executives. The result further revealed that 211 representing 72% were of the opinion that foreign advertising agency affiliations are very necessary for the Nigerian advertising industry.

Q1. What are the factors relating to foreign advertising affiliations among local advertising agencies in Nigeria?

The data analyzed revealed that a high number of the respondents believed that there are many factors relating to foreign advertising affiliations and some of which include: core manpower, size, and age of agency, billings or business worked upon, CEO visibility and leadership, creativity, and clients' quality and quantity. The study revealed that 252 respondents representing 86% believed that core manpower is a major factor relating to foreign advertising affiliations. The mean score is $4.137 > 3.0$ and it shows that the result is accepted because the mean score was above the acceptance level of 3.0. This means that core manpower is a factor relating to foreign advertising affiliations. Similarly, billings or business worked upon is a factor relating to foreign advertising affiliations as 187 respondents or 63.8% indicated as such, and this is reflected in the mean score of $4.29 > 3.0$. 213 respondents or 72.7% indicated that Clients' quality and quantity represent another factor of foreign advertising affiliations with a mean score of $4.18 > 3.0$. Also, the mean score of those that believed that CEO visibility and leadership as a major factor in affiliations-link is $3.28 > 3.0$ because the mean score was above the acceptance level of 3.0. However, 154 respondents or 52.6% perceived that creativity is not a factor relating to foreign advertising affiliations as the mean score of the responses was below the acceptance level of 3.0, and therefore rejected. The mean score is $2.51 < 3.0$. In support of these findings, Dr.Celey Okogun in 2012 and CEO of Novelpotta advertising whose agency is affiliated to Young and Rubicam of USA opined that manpower resources, rate of turn-over, businesses or billings, profile and foundation of the agency, and CEO visibility and leadership amongst others top the list of factors relating to foreign advertising affiliations or global alignments.

Q2. What are the attributes that facilitate foreign advertising affiliations among local agencies in Nigeria?

The data revealed that foreign advertising affiliations are facilitated by different advertising attributes which promote output and performance. Specifically, foreign advertising affiliations favour agencies with core manpower and a strong foundation as 247 respondents or 84.3% supported the statement with a mean score of $4.11 > 3.0$, thereby facilitating affiliations. Another attribute that facilitates foreign advertising affiliations is that foreign networks seek local agencies with adequate manpower and logistics. This is

seen in the high positive response rate of 75.4% or 221 respondents with a mean score of $4.18 > 3.0$. Furthermore, other attributes that facilitate global alignments include preferences given to local agencies that are big by their foreign partners and showing specific favour to medium-sized agencies. 254 respondents or 86.7% indicated a preference to local agencies by the overseas partner with a mean score of $4.09 > 3.0$, while 247 respondents or 84.3% indicated foreign advertising affiliations favouring medium-sized agencies as an attribute that facilitates foreign advertising affiliations. The mean score is $3.95 > 3.0$. However, despite some challenges, a significant percentage of the respondents indicated that foreign advertising affiliations are facilitated by a lot of attributes. Industry leaders and observers such as Chris Doghudje, Billy Lawson, Mrs. Funke Nwankwo, and Mr. Longley Evru see foreign advertising affiliations attributes as critical indices that guard against campaign pitfalls in advertising. According to Doghudje, former CEO of Lintas Advertising who joined the advertising business in 1967, and Billy Lawson, Chairman of LTC Advertising Agency who also entered the industry in 1975, said, "advertising is a competitive business whose success depends on how creative the agency is, i.e. ability to win the minds of the consumers through creative campaigns and specific attributes depending on each agency's style".

Q3: What are the factors that militate against foreign advertising affiliations among advertising agencies in Nigeria?

The study showed that top and bottom-line agencies sought foreign advertising affiliations but it has not been easy for most of the local agencies due to the fact that affiliation processes require specific, stringent conditions which most agencies could not provide. The study indicated that 199 respondents or 67.9% believed that lack of infrastructure militates against foreign advertising affiliations operations with a mean score of $4.32 > 3.0$. 181 respondents or 61.8% perceived that a one-man agency militates against the operation of advertising with a mean score of $4.32 > 3.0$. To support this finding, a good number of the interviewees believed that foreign advertising affiliations require local agencies to have enough resources including material and personnel. The study revealed that most of the local agencies fail in getting affiliations approval because of their structure, inadequate staff, capabilities, skills, and poor leadership.

Q4: What are the major advantages derivable from engaging in foreign advertising affiliations among advertising agencies in Nigeria?

The data showed that 168 respondents or 57.3% believed that foreign advertising affiliations expose local advertising agencies to wider business opportunities thereby increasing the volume of businesses, the mean score is $3.45 > 3.0$ while 240 respondents or 81.9% affirmed that foreign advertising affiliations enhance pitching for major accounts with global best practices. The mean score is $4.11 > 3.0$ and 182 respondents or 62.1% believed that foreign advertising affiliations generate financial gains, rewards, and profits with a mean score of $3.52 > 3.0$. The study also revealed that foreign advertising affiliations promote local agencies' output with a mean score of $M=4.30 > 3.0$. The findings also showed that global agencies have an expansive pool of human resources and in-depth knowledge as well as financial resources that readily put them at an advantage when they need to pitch for any advertising business. It is discovered that affiliations with global advertising agencies bring to the local affiliates all years of

experience and professional practice as well as work systems of the international partners.

Result of Test of Hypotheses

The result of the two hypotheses revealed that the two null hypotheses formulated in the study were rejected. H1, Pearson Chi-square showed that the rating on the necessity of foreign advertising agency affiliations is affected by the year of practice of advertising. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. In H2, Pearson Chi-square showed that the rating on the necessity of foreign advertising agency affiliation is affected by age. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Summary

It is seen that global alignments are influenced by many and varied factors locally and globally. It was found out that core manpower, size of the agency, billings, CEO visibility leadership, and client' quality and quantity are the factors relating to foreign advertising agency affiliations in Nigeria. As a result, local agencies become more effective and efficient due to effective management of these factors. Analysis of the attributes that facilitate foreign advertising agency affiliations revealed that respondents were aware of the foreign advertising agency attributes which improved operations of the industry especially in terms of campaign strategy, art direction, and media planning and execution of adaptable projects which increase their bottom-line businesses. The analysis that focused on the issue of factors that hamper or militate against foreign advertising agency affiliations revealed that 67.9% of the respondents opined that lack of infrastructures militates against the operation of local agencies. It was found out that 61.8% of the respondents stated an agency run by one man militates against foreign advertising agency affiliations as foreigners do not want to go into business partnerships with an agency that is run or manned by one man because of huge negative implications. It was seen also that managing affiliations threats or pitfalls well will help the local agencies achieve optimum business objectives and overcome the liability of foreignness associated with internalization of the advertising business.

It was discovered that a higher percentage of the respondents and 100% interviewees indicated that there are several derivable advantages or prospects in foreign advertising affiliations. 57.3% of the respondents believed that foreign advertising affiliations expose local agencies to wider business opportunities thereby increasing the volume of business, 81.9% of the respondents said that foreign advertising affiliations enhance pitching for major accounts with the global template, access to broader world best practices while 62.1% of them indicated that affiliations with global advertising network generate financial gains, rewards, and profits for the local agencies, 70% of the subjects believed that foreign advertising affiliations promote outputs for local agencies, while 56.3% of the respondents agreed that engaging in global advertising networks provide local advertising agencies with wider and prestigious portfolios.

Conclusion

The study concludes that foreign advertising agency affiliations in Nigeria have generated a big argument as to whether foreign advertising affiliations promote or hamper the growth of the industry. Foreign advertising affiliations seem to improve operations and performances of the local affiliated agencies. It was found out that several

factors influence global advertising affiliations and the local agencies with foreign affiliations are more effective, efficient, and better structured than the non-affiliated peers, which enable them to generate great gains, profits, create quality and creative works, improve growth and general output. From the above, compelling arguments remained for assuming that foreign advertising affiliations hold the key to improve operations and performances among the local advertising agencies in Nigeria, notwithstanding the threats posed by foreign advertising agency affiliations.

Although creativity and originality issues seem to constitute a big problem for both the affiliated and stand-alone agencies, it was found out that affiliated agencies engage in both local and international businesses while the non-affiliated counterparts work on local businesses only. On whether it is strategically and economically worthwhile engaging in foreign affiliations among the local advertising agencies, the study revealed that affiliated agencies seem to perform better than the unaffiliated agencies. It is important to note that while it is essentially economic and strategic engagement in foreign advertising agency affiliations among the local agencies, available shreds of evidence suggest various factors propel foreign affiliations in the industry such as prestigious foreign accounts or blue-chip accounts, best practices to improve work systems, proprietary tools, training, technical support, financial resources, wider business opportunities, reputation and prestige and automatic transfer of the account to the local affiliates by the mega-agency. The researcher concluded that the rating on the necessity of foreign advertising agency affiliations is affected by the year and age of the agency practice of advertising.

Recommendations

It is recommended that local advertising agencies in Nigeria should seize the opportunity of the prospects of foreign affiliations to carry out in-depth communications research and training for improved operations and performances. It is also recommended that local advertising agencies in Nigeria should scrutinize critically the various philosophies of foreign advertising agencies before engaging in them or re-alignments. Activity-based costing is also recommended to manage the cost structures in and out of the partnership as well as to re-evaluate the accounts functions after affiliations; an exit clause in the contract agreement should be fair to both parties and not punitive.

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