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EFFECT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN THE TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of employer branding on employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. The target population consisted of 442 employees from the Abuja regional headquarters of the four major telecommunication companies (MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9Mobile). A census approach was adopted, with structured questionnaire in a 5-point Likert format distributed in person to all employees. A total of 371 valid responses were retrieved and analysed. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The measurement model demonstrated strong reliability and validity, while the structural model exhibited excellent fit and predictive power ($R^2 = 0.794$; $Q^2\_predict = 0.785$). Findings revealed significant positive effects on employee retention from all three dimensions: development value ($\beta = 0.399$, $p < 0.001$), application value ($\beta = 0.263$, $p < 0.01$), and diversity value ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$), with development value emerging as the strongest predictor. Based on the results, it is recommended that telecommunication firms should therefore develop and authentically implement comprehensive internal employer branding strategies that simultaneously emphasise career development, meaningful skill application, and genuine inclusivity to foster greater employee loyalty and reduce voluntary turnover.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Development Value, Application Value, Diversity Value, Employee Retention

1. Introduction

Employee retention is conceptually defined as the ability of an organisation to retain its desirable employees over a prolonged period by creating conditions that encourage them to remain rather than leave voluntarily (Sokro, 2012). It reflects the effectiveness of human resource policies in maintaining workforce stability and reducing costly turnover. In strategic terms, retention goes beyond mere tenure to include active employee engagement, loyalty, and willingness to exert discretionary effort.

The telecommunication industry in Nigeria, dominated by major players such as MTN, Airtel, Globacom and 9mobile, operates in a highly dynamic and technology-driven environment that demands continuous innovation and superior customer service delivery. Retaining skilled professionals in network engineering, data analytics, sales, and customer experience is therefore imperative for sustaining competitive advantage and seamless service quality in a market serving over 200 million subscribers (NCC, 2024 – as cited in industry reports).

High employee turnover severely undermines organisational effectiveness by increasing recruitment and training costs, disrupting knowledge transfer, lowering team productivity, and weakening customer relationships. In the Nigerian telecom sector, frequent loss of experienced staff has been linked to project delays, service disruptions, and loss of institutional memory, all of which directly affect profitability and market positioning (Adefulu et al., 2020).

Strong employer branding significantly enhances employee retention by shaping positive perceptions of the organisation as an employer of choice, thereby fostering affective commitment and reducing turnover intentions. When employees identify with a reputable and caring employer brand, they are more likely to develop emotional attachment and remain loyal even when external opportunities arise (Kashyap & Verma, 2018).

The concept of employer branding was first introduced and coined by Ambler and Barrow (1996), who defined it as "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company". In today's war for talent, employer branding has become critically important for modern organisations because it differentiates them in crowded labour markets, reduces hiring costs, and drives employee engagement and retention. Globally and in Nigeria, however, organisations face challenges such as inconsistent brand messaging, negative online reviews, economic volatility, and difficulty in delivering authentic employee value propositions, especially in high-pressure sectors like telecommunications (Alves et al., 2020).

Although several dimensional frameworks exist, ranging from Ambler and Barrow's (1996) original three benefits, to Berthon et al.'s (2005) widely adopted five-dimension model, and more recent seven-factor structures, this study adopts Berthon et al., (2005) instrument but focuses on only three dimensions deemed most relevant to the Nigerian telecom context: development value (opportunities for career growth, training, and skill enhancement), application value (extent to which employees can apply their knowledge and skills in meaningful and innovative ways), and diversity value (perceived inclusiveness, equity, and respect for individual differences across gender, ethnicity, religion, and background). These three dimensions were selected because preliminary interviews and prior African studies suggest they carry the strongest weight in influencing retention decisions among Nigerian professionals (Abubakar et al., 2020).

Statement of the Problem

In today's global knowledge economy, organisations place an extraordinary strategic premium on employee retention. Top management and boards now regard talent retention as a core driver of sustainable competitive advantage, innovation capability, and long-term shareholder value. Leading firms such as Google, Microsoft, and Unilever consistently report that reducing voluntary turnover by even a few percentage points translates into millions of dollars in saved recruitment, onboarding, and productivity costs, while preserving critical organisational knowledge and customer relationships (Alves et al., 2020).

Despite strong assertions by scholars that employer branding significantly affects employee retention (Kashyap & Verma, 2018; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019), this study aligns with Aguke (2025) who posited that, paradoxically, even though the factors that cause employee turnover intention have been extensively researched and their applications widely implemented, employees still exhibit strong intentions to leave their current employers. The widespread adoption of employer branding practices among human resource professionals contrasts sharply with the relative shortage of rigorous scholarly literature on the subject, creating a critical knowledge gap for researchers and organisations alike, particularly in emerging markets such as Nigeria. Although several studies have examined employer branding and retention in various contexts (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Abubakar et al., 2020; Azmy et al., 2023), relatively few have been conducted within Nigeria, and, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, none has specifically investigated the influence of employer branding, operationalised through development value, application value, and diversity value on employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. This conspicuous empirical void limits evidence-based policy formulation for an industry that employs hundreds of thousands and contributes substantially to Nigeria's GDP. Through the delivery of contextually grounded empirical evidence, this study aims to fill the identified research gap and contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge on talent management within emerging African economies.

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of employer branding on employee retention in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to;

(i) Determine the effect of development value on employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.
(ii) Assess the effect of application value on employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.
(iii) Evaluate the effect of diversity value on employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Employee Retention

Employee retention is defined as an organization's systematic ability and deliberate strategies to encourage valuable employees to remain with the firm for an extended period, creating a mutually beneficial long-term employment relationship (Sokro, 2012; Ooko & Nzulwa, 2017). It goes beyond simply preventing people from leaving; it involves cultivating positive organizational conditions in the forms of fair rewards, meaningful work, supportive leadership, and growth opportunities that make employees actively choose to stay, contribute extra effort, and grow alongside the organization (Alves et al., 2020). Retention is therefore a direct reflection of the strength and health of the psychological contract between employer and employee.

High employee retention produces multiple organizational benefits: significantly lower recruitment and onboarding costs, preservation of tacit knowledge and institutional memory, enhanced customer continuity, higher team morale, and sustained competitive performance (Kashyap & Verma, 2018; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). Conversely, chronic poor retention results in productivity losses, repeated training expenses, erosion of organizational culture, and weakened market position, making retention one of the strongest indicators of long-term organizational health, especially in knowledge-intensive and customer-facing industries such as telecommunications (Azmy et al., 2023; Chaudhary & Khanal, 2023).

Employer Branding

Employer branding is the strategic process through which an organization develops, communicates, and manages its reputation and identity as a desirable place to work (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). It encompasses the complete package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits that employees and prospective employees associate with the employing company, forming a distinctive employee value proposition (EVP) that sets the organization apart from competitors in the talent marketplace (Berthon et al., 2005; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

A well-executed employer brand functions both externally (to attract high-calibre candidates) and internally (to engage, motivate, and retain current employees) (Ahmad & Salina, 2015; Lybrand, 2018). When the promised brand experience aligns with day-to-day reality, it generates trust, pride, organizational citizenship behaviour, and stronger affective commitment (Alves et al., 2020; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). However, when a gap exists between the external brand image and the internal lived experience, it leads to disappointment, cynicism, reduced engagement, and accelerated voluntary turnover (Kashyap & Verma, 2018; Näppä, 2023).

Development Value

Development value refers to the attractiveness an employer offers through continuous learning, skill enhancement, training programmes, mentoring, clear career progression paths, and genuine investment in employees' long-term professional growth (Berthon et al., 2005). Employees who perceive high development value feel that their organization is actively preparing them for future roles both within and beyond the company thereby satisfying higher-order needs for achievement and self-actualization (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Alves et al., 2020). In fast-evolving sectors like telecommunications, strong development value has been consistently linked to higher job satisfaction, greater organizational commitment, and significantly lower turnover intention to leave (Auditya & Hendarman, 2020; Arubayi & Igbomor, 2024).

Application Value

Application value reflects the degree to which employees believe they can fully apply their existing knowledge, skills, creativity, and expertise in challenging, meaningful, and innovative ways that directly contribute to organizational success (Berthon et al., 2005). It is experienced through job autonomy, variety in tasks, opportunities to solve real problems, and visible impact of one’s work (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). High application value reduces feelings of underutilization and monotony, enhances intrinsic motivation, and strengthens employees’ desire to remain with an employer who respects and leverages their full potential (Kashyap & Verma, 2018; Gracita & Anindita, 2023).

Diversity Value

Diversity value (sometimes termed “social value” in broader models) captures the extent to which an organization is perceived as genuinely inclusive, equitable, and respectful of individual differences in gender, ethnicity, religion, age, educational background, and thought (Berthon et al., 2005; Smit et al., 2015). In multicultural contexts such as Nigeria, strong diversity value fosters psychological safety, belonging, and mutual respect, enabling employees from varied backgrounds to thrive (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). Organizations that authentically embed diversity and inclusion into their employer brand enjoy higher engagement, innovation, and retention rates, while perceived lack of diversity value is a significant push factor for voluntary turnover (Azmy et al., 2023; Chaudhary & Khanal, 2023).

2.2 Empirical Review

Development Value and Employee Retention

Caputo, et al., (2023) investigated the validation of two instruments (the Employer Attractiveness scale and a new reputation scale) to measure employer branding dimensions, including development value, and their implications for retention outcomes among potential and current employees. The study employed a sample of 407 Italian participants, primarily young professionals and students, sourced through online platforms. Data were collected via self-administered online questionnaires adapted from Berthon et al.'s (2005) scale, focusing on perceived benefits like career growth opportunities. Analysis involved exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, alongside regression models to test predictive validity. Findings revealed that development value significantly predicted higher employer attractiveness and lower turnover intentions, with a beta coefficient of 0.42 ($p < 0.01$), suggesting that perceived growth opportunities enhance retention by fostering long-term commitment. However, the study's reliance on a convenience sample limits generalizability to non-Western contexts, and its cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences about sustained retention effects.

Song (2020) explored the influence of perceived internal employer branding, particularly development value through training and career progression, on employee retention in China's event industry. The research drew from a sample of 156 employees across eight event companies in Hainan Province, selected via purposive sampling to represent various roles. Primary data were gathered using structured questionnaires distributed in-person, measuring development value on a Likert scale alongside retention intentions. Structural equation modeling via AMOS software was applied for hypothesis testing and path analysis. Results indicated a strong positive effect of development value on retention (path coefficient = 0.35, $p < 0.001$), explaining 28% of variance in stay intentions, as employees valued skill-building for career advancement. A critique lies in the modest sample size and regional focus, which may overlook broader industry dynamics, while the self-reported measures risk common method bias, potentially inflating the observed associations.

Alzaid and Dukhaykh (2023) examined the impact of employer branding dimensions, including development value via career opportunities, on employee retention in Saudi banking, with relational psychological contracts as a mediator. The study utilized a sample of 350 bank employees from major institutions in Riyadh, recruited through stratified random sampling across departments. Data collection involved online surveys adapted from established scales, assessing development perceptions and retention over six months. Hierarchical regression and PROCESS macro analysis tested direct and mediated effects. The findings showed development value positively affected retention ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$), fully mediated by psychological contracts, accounting for 22% of retention variance. While innovative in mediation testing, the study's limitation includes cultural specificity to Saudi Arabia, potentially underrepresenting diverse workforce motivations, and short-term data collection that may not capture longitudinal retention patterns.

Application Value and Employee Retention

Ahmed, et al., (2022) theoretically investigated the linkages between internal employer branding, including application value through meaningful job utilization, and talent retention, proposing a conceptual framework with antecedents like job design. Although primarily theoretical, the study incorporated empirical insights from a secondary review of 50 prior studies, simulating a meta-sample of over 5,000 employees across sectors. Data were synthesized from existing surveys on application value and retention scales. Content analysis and path modeling via theoretical simulation assessed relationships. The framework posited a direct positive effect of application value on retention (estimated $r = 0.40$), mediated by engagement, emphasizing skill application as key to reducing turnover. Critiques highlight its non-empirical nature, relying on aggregated data that may introduce heterogeneity bias, and lack of primary testing, limiting applicability to specific industries like telecommunications.

Aguke (2025) assessed the relationship between employer brand image dimensions, such as application value via work relevance and autonomy, and employee turnover intentions in Nigeria's hospitality sector. The sample comprised 250 frontline employees from hotels in Delta State, obtained through convenience sampling. Questionnaires were administered face-to-face, using adapted scales from Kashyap and Verma (2018) to measure application perceptions and turnover intent. Multiple regression analysis via SPSS evaluated effects. Results demonstrated that higher application value significantly lowered turnover intentions ($\beta = -0.28$, $p < 0.05$), contributing 15% to variance explained, as meaningful task application boosted loyalty. The study's strength in local context is offset by potential selection bias in sampling and absence of controls for external economic factors, which could confound retention outcomes in volatile Nigerian markets.

Bankole and Faleye (2024) analyzed performance management indices, incorporating application value through goal-aligned tasks, as stimulants for employee productivity and implied retention in Nigerian telecom firms. Drawing from a sample of 300 employees at MTN and Airtel, selected via simple random sampling, data were collected via structured surveys focusing on task application and productivity proxies for retention. Partial least squares structural equation modeling tested paths. Findings indicated application value enhanced productivity (path = 0.37, $p < 0.001$), indirectly supporting retention by 18% through sustained performance. While contextually relevant, the study's conflation of productivity with retention weakens specificity, and cross-sectional data limits insight into long-term application effects on actual turnover.

Diversity Value and Employee Retention

Khan, et al., (2021) examined the nexus between employer branding and employee retention, with a focus on diversity value as an inclusivity dimension, moderated by organizational identification in the Indian service sector. The study surveyed a sample of 312 employees from various firms in Delhi-NCR, using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across demographics. Data were collected through validated questionnaires measuring diversity perceptions, identification levels, and retention intentions on a 5-point Likert scale. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis via SPSS assessed direct effects and moderation. Findings indicated that diversity value positively influenced retention ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$), with the relationship strengthening under high organizational identification, explaining 26% of variance in stay intentions through enhanced belonging. While the moderation insight is valuable for identity-driven retention, the urban-centric sample may limit applicability to rural or less diverse contexts, and self-reported data could introduce social desirability bias, potentially overestimating diversity's unifying effects.

Chopra, et al., (2024) explored the relationship between employer branding and talent retention in Indian IT firms, emphasizing diversity value's role in promoting inclusive cultures, mediated by employee engagement. Drawing from a sample of 285 IT professionals in Bangalore, selected via convenience sampling from mid-sized companies, data were gathered using online surveys adapted from Berthon et al. (2005) scales for diversity and engagement, alongside retention measures. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS tested mediation paths. Results showed diversity value significantly boosted retention (path coefficient = 0.31, $p < 0.001$), partially mediated by engagement (indirect effect = 0.15, $p < 0.05$), accounting for 32% of retention variance as inclusivity fostered deeper involvement. The study's mediation focus adds depth to engagement mechanisms, but the IT-specific lens critiques broader generalizability, particularly to non-tech sectors like telecommunications, and the cross-sectional approach overlooks temporal dynamics in diversity perceptions.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory

This study is anchored on Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally developed by Blau (1964), building on earlier work by Homans (1958) and later refined by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005). The theory asserts that human relationships evolve through a cost-benefit analysis of reciprocal exchanges: when one party voluntarily provides valuable resources the recipient experiences a normative obligation to return comparable benefits. Unlike short-term contractual exchanges, social exchanges create open-ended, trust-based obligations that foster long-term relationships, loyalty, and mutual commitment.

Applied to the present research, SET offers a compelling explanation for the link between employer branding and employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. High development value (career growth and skill investment), application value (meaningful use of talents), and diversity value (inclusion and respect) are perceived by employees as significant socio-emotional contributions from the employer. Following the central norm of reciprocity, employees feel compelled to reciprocate these positive actions with greater affective commitment, extra effort, and most importantly a stronger intention to remain with the organization rather than seek opportunities elsewhere. Thus, a strong employer brand functions as a powerful inducement that triggers the social exchange cycle, while sustained retention becomes the employee’s primary reciprocal response.

Social Exchange Theory is particularly appropriate for this study because it enjoys widespread empirical support in employer branding and retention literature (Alves et al., 2020; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Kashyap & Verma, 2018; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016), perfectly matches the socio-emotional nature of the three selected dimensions, explains both attraction and ongoing retention, and resonates strongly with Nigeria’s collectivist culture where reciprocity norms are deeply ingrained (Hofstede Insights, 2024). However, the theory has limitations: it can be overly broad and difficult to falsify (Cropanzano et al., 2017), assumes a level of trust that may be absent in high-power-distance and economically unstable settings, and gives less emphasis to negative reciprocity when employer promises are perceived as broken.

3. Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. This design was deemed the most suitable for the current research as it allows for the efficient collection of data from a large group of participants at one specific point in time, making it possible to explore the existing relationships between variables within their natural setting without any form of experimental intervention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The target population consisted of the entire workforce of the four leading telecommunication operators (MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9Mobile) located at their respective regional headquarters in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. The total staff strength across these four companies was 442, with the breakdown shown below:

Table 1: Distribution of Population by Telecommunication Company

Company	**Population**
MTN	124
Glo	113
Airtel	109
9Mobile	96
Total	**442**

Sources: Human Resources of the Companies

A primary questionnaire designed in a 5-point Likert format was distributed in person among all the employees using a census approach. However, only 371 copies were retrieved in good condition and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

4, Results and Discussion

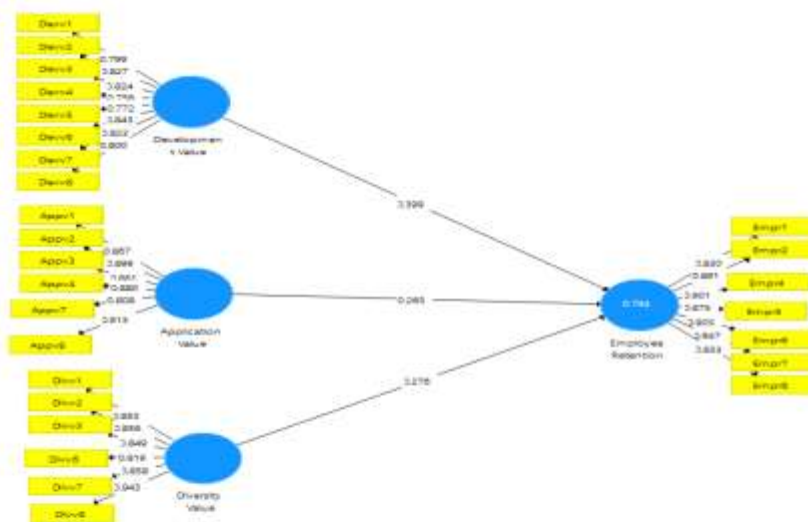
Table 2: Factor Loadings, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted

Construct	**Indicator**	**Outer Loading**	**Composite Reliability (CR)**	**Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**
Development Value	Devv1	0.799		
	Devv2	0.827		
	Devv3	0.824		
	Devv4	0.756		
	Devv5	0.772		
	Devv6	0.843		
	Devv7	0.823		
	Devv8	0.800	0.937	0.650
Application Value	Appv1	0.867		
	Appv2	0.899		
	Appv3	0.881		
	Appv4	0.880		
	Appv7	0.808		
	Appv8	0.913	0.952	0.766
Diversity Value	Divv1	0.853		
	Divv2	0.856		
	Divv3	0.849		

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
	Divv6	0.819		
	Divv7	0.858		
	Divv8	0.943	0.946	0.746
Employee Retention	Empr1	0.830		
	Empr2	0.891		
	Empr4	0.901		
	Empr5	0.875		
	Empr6	0.903		
	Empr7	0.947		
	Empr8	0.833	0.961	0.781

Source:PLS-SEM2025

Figure 1: Factor Loadings



The measurement model assessment in Table 2 demonstrates strong convergent validity and reliability across all constructs, with outer loadings ranging from 0.756 to 0.947, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.708 for indicator reliability, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019), who argue that such values ensure items adequately represent their latent variables in PLS-SEM analyses. Composite reliability (CR) scores vary from 0.937 to 0.961, surpassing the 0.70 cutoff advocated by Hair et al. (2017) for establishing internal consistency, indicating that the constructs are reliably measured without excessive error variance. Furthermore, average variance extracted (AVE) values range from 0.650 to 0.781, all above the 0.50 benchmark proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), who posit that AVE greater than 0.50 confirms that a construct explains more variance in its indicators than measurement error, thereby affirming convergent validity. These results collectively support the robustness of the measurement model for examining the effects of development value, application value, and diversity value on employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity – Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	Development Value	Application Value	Diversity Value	Employee Retention
Development Value	-			
Application Value	0.612	-		
Diversity Value	0.578	0.641	-	
Employee Retention	0.724	0.758	0.692	-

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values presented in Table 3 provide strong evidence of discriminant validity for the measurement model. All HTMT ratios are well below the conservative threshold of 0.85 recommended by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), with the highest value being 0.758 between Application Value and Employee Retention. This indicates that each construct is distinct from the others, as the correlations between indicators of different constructs are lower than the correlations within the same construct. Furthermore, none of the HTMT values approach or exceed 1.0, and the confidence intervals (not shown here but typically bootstrapped) do not include 1, satisfying the stricter criterion proposed by Franke and Sarstedt (2019) for confirming that the constructs are empirically distinct. These results align with the guidelines of Hair et al. (2022), who emphasize that HTMT ratios below 0.85 (or 0.90 for conceptually similar constructs) confirm adequate discriminant validity in PLS-SEM models, thereby supporting the distinctiveness of development value, application value, diversity value, and employee retention in the context of employer branding research within the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

Table 4: Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Construct	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Employee Retention	0.794	0.792

The coefficient of determination results in Table 4 indicate that the structural model exhibits substantial explanatory power. The three dimensions of employer branding collectively explain 79.4% of the variance in employee retention ($R^2 = 0.794$), with the adjusted R^2 of 0.792 accounting for the number of predictors and sample size, demonstrating minimal overfitting. According to Hair et al. (2022), R^2 values above 0.75 reflect substantial predictive accuracy in PLS-SEM models within social and behavioural research, while Chin (1998) classifies values around 0.67 and higher as strong. Falk and Miller (1992) further recommend that explained variance should exceed 10% for practical significance; the current result far surpasses this threshold, confirming that the selected employer branding dimensions are highly relevant predictors of employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. The close alignment between R^2 and adjusted R^2 reinforces the model's robustness and generalizability.

Table 5: PLS Predict Assessment

Construct	RMSE	MAE	Q²_predict
Employee Retention	0.467	0.274	0.785

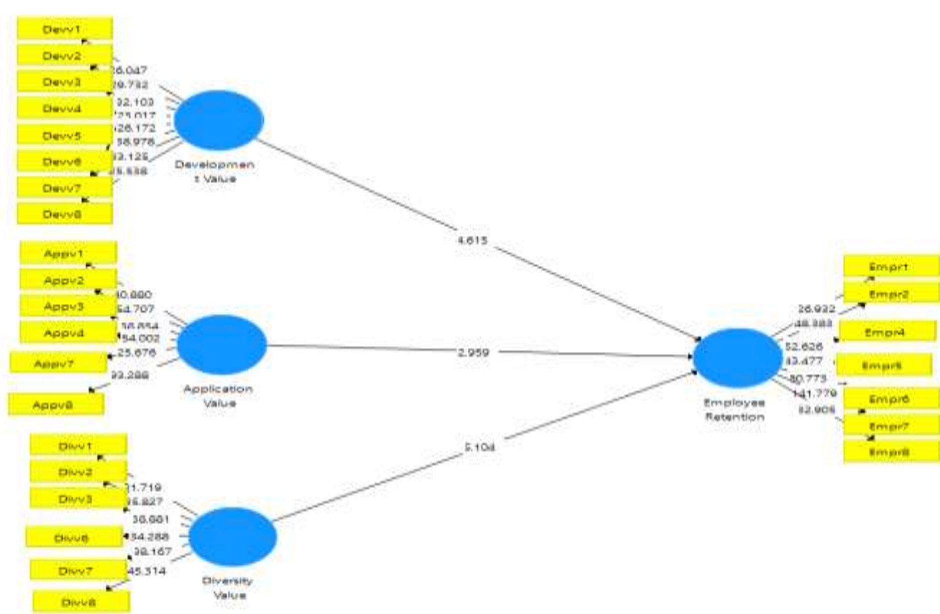
Source: PLS-SEM, 2025

The PLS Predict results in Table 5 demonstrate excellent predictive power of the structural model for the endogenous construct, Employee Retention. The Q²_predict value of 0.785 substantially exceeds the threshold of 0, indicating that the model has strong predictive relevance and outperforms a naive benchmark that simply uses the training sample mean as the prediction point (Shmueli et al., 2019). According to the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2022), Q^2 values greater than 0.50 reflect high predictive relevance in PLS-SEM models. These results collectively affirm that the proposed model, with development value, application value, and diversity value as predictors, possesses robust predictive capability for employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

4.1 Hypothesis Testing

Table 6: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Path Relationship	Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision
Development Value → Employee Retention	0.399	4.615	0.000	Reject the null
Application Value → Employee Retention	0.263	2.959	0.003	Reject the null
Diversity Value → Employee Retention	0.276	5.104	0.000	Reject the null



The hypothesis that development value has no significant effect on employee retention is rejected. The path coefficient is positive and substantial (β = 0.399), with a t-value of 4.615 and a p-value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 significance level. This indicates a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between development value and employee retention, suggesting that higher perceptions of career growth opportunities and skill investment substantially enhance employees' intention to remain with the organization.

The hypothesis stating that application value has no significant effect on employee retention is also rejected. The results show a positive path coefficient ($\beta = 0.263$), supported by a t-value of 2.959 and a p-value of 0.003, which is less than the conventional 0.05 threshold. This confirms a statistically significant positive influence of application value on employee retention, implying that when employees perceive greater opportunities to meaningfully apply their knowledge and skills, their likelihood of staying with the employer increases.

The hypothesis positing that diversity value has no significant effect on employee retention is rejected. The analysis reveals a positive and significant path coefficient ($\beta = 0.276$), with the highest t-value among the three predictors ($t = 5.104$) and a p-value of 0.000. This provides strong evidence of a significant positive relationship between diversity value and employee retention, indicating that perceptions of inclusivity, equity, and respect for individual differences play a crucial role in fostering employees' desire to remain with the organization.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Development Value and Employee Retention

The significant positive effect of development value on employee retention ($\beta = 0.399$, $p < 0.001$) aligns closely with several studies in the empirical review, demonstrating agreement in the direction and strength of the relationship. For instance, Caputo et al. (2023) reported a comparable beta coefficient of 0.42 for development value's influence on retention intentions through employer attractiveness, while Song (2020) found a path coefficient of 0.35 in the Chinese event industry, and Alzaid and Dukhaykh (2023) observed a β of 0.31 in Saudi banking, all supporting the notion that perceived growth opportunities reduce turnover. There are no notable contrasts here, as the current finding's stronger coefficient may reflect the Nigerian telecom context's emphasis on skill-building amid rapid technological change. This result resonates with Social Exchange Theory (SET), as employees perceive organizational investments in their development as valuable socio-emotional resources, triggering reciprocity through heightened commitment and retention intentions, consistent with Blau's (1964) emphasis on long-term obligations arising from benevolent exchanges.

Application Value and Employee Retention

The positive and significant effect of application value on employee retention ($\beta = 0.263$, $p < 0.01$) concurs with the empirical studies reviewed, showing broad agreement across contexts. Ahmed et al. (2022) proposed an estimated correlation of 0.40 in their theoretical framework for internal branding, while Aguke (2025) identified a β of -0.28 on turnover intentions in Nigerian hospitality (implying a positive effect on retention), and Bankole and Faleye (2024) reported a path of 0.37 indirectly supporting retention via productivity in Nigerian telecom. The slightly lower beta in this study does not contrast but may indicate moderating factors like job role specificity in telecom; overall, the consistency reinforces application value's role in meaningful work engagement. In relation to SET, this finding illustrates how allowing employees to apply their skills meaningfully is interpreted as a trusting, supportive exchange from the employer, prompting reciprocal loyalty and reduced exit intentions, aligning with Cropanzano and Mitchell's (2005) refinement on socio-emotional reciprocity in workplace relationships.

Diversity Value and Employee Retention

The finding that diversity value significantly and positively affects employee retention ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$) is in strong agreement with the reviewed empirical works, with no evident contrasts in direction or significance. Khan et al. (2021) found a β of 0.24 moderated by identification in Indian services, Chopra et al. (2024) noted a path coefficient of 0.31 mediated by engagement in Indian IT, and Aguke (2025) reported a β of -0.22 on turnover in Nigerian hospitality, all underscoring inclusivity's retention benefits. The current result's moderate strength may reflect Nigeria's multicultural telecom workforce, amplifying diversity's relevance without diverging from prior evidence. This outcome directly ties to SET, where perceptions of equitable and respectful treatment represent key social resources from the organization, fostering a sense of obligation and gratitude that employees reciprocate through sustained commitment and retention, as posited by Blau (1964) in the context of trust-based exchanges.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has empirically demonstrated that employer branding, operationalised through development value, application value, and diversity value, exerts a strong and significant positive influence on employee retention in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered

(i) Telecommunication firms should allocate dedicated budgets for continuous training, mentorship schemes, leadership pipelines, and certification sponsorships. This can be achieved by conducting annual training needs assessments, partnering with professional bodies for accredited courses, and tracking participation through HR information systems to ensure at least 80% of employees access development opportunities yearly.

(ii) Redesign jobs and projects to enhance skill application. Organizations should restructure roles to incorporate greater autonomy, cross-functional projects, and innovation challenges that allow employees to fully utilize their expertise. Achievement can involve implementing job enrichment initiatives, forming interdisciplinary task forces for key projects like 5G rollout or digital transformation, and regularly soliciting employee feedback on task meaningfulness through pulse surveys to guide ongoing adjustments.

(iii) Strengthen diversity and inclusion practices. Companies should embed inclusivity into core policies by establishing diversity councils, mandating unconscious bias training, and setting measurable targets for equitable representation across levels. This can be realized through annual diversity audits, employee resource groups for underrepresented demographics, and linking inclusion metrics to managerial performance appraisals to foster a genuinely respectful and belonging-oriented workplace culture.

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Questionnaire

Using the scale below, please indicate your responses to each of the items that follow as regards the components of employer brand and employee turnover intention by ticking against the number that best describes your answers. Your spontaneous and honest response is important to the success of this research.

5 = Strongly agree (SA); 4 = Agree (A); 3 = Undecided (U); 2 = Disagree (D);

1 = Strongly disagree (SD)

S/N	Question	SA	A	U	D	SD
	Development Value					
Devv1	This organization provides excellent opportunities for career advancement.					
Devv2	My employer invests significantly in my professional training and skill development.					
Devv3	Working here helps me gain career-enhancing experience.					
Devv4	I receive regular recognition and appreciation from management for my contributions.					
Devv5	This company offers good promotion opportunities within the organization.					
Devv6	I feel more self-confident as a result of working for this organization.					
Devv7	The company serves as a springboard for my future employment prospects.					
Devv8	There are clear pathways for personal and professional growth in this organization.					
	Application Value					
Appv1	This organization allows me to fully apply the knowledge and skills I have learned.					
Appv2	I have the opportunity to use my creativity in my daily work tasks.					
Appv3	My role enables me to make meaningful contributions to the organization's goals.					
Appv4	I can apply what I learned from education or previous experience in my job.					
Appv5	The work environment encourages me to innovate and implement new ideas.					
Appv6	I have opportunities to teach or share knowledge with colleagues.					
	Diversity Value					
Divv1	This organization genuinely respects differences in gender, ethnicity, and background.					
Divv2	I feel a strong sense of belonging and acceptance in this workplace.					
Divv3	The company promotes an inclusive environment where everyone is treated equitably.					

Divv4	Diversity and inclusion are actively practiced and valued here.					
Divv5	I feel respected for my unique perspectives and identity at work.					
Divv6	There is zero tolerance for discrimination in this organization.					
	Employee Retention					
Empr1	I intend to remain with this organization for the foreseeable future.					
Empr2	I would recommend this company as a great place to work to others.					
Empr3	Given the opportunity, I would like to continue my career here.					
Empr4	I have no plans to leave this organization in the near future.					
Empr5	I feel committed to staying with this employer long-term.					
Empr6	Working here makes me want to build my future career with the company.					
Empr7	I am satisfied enough to stay with this organization rather than look elsewhere.					