

EMPLOYER BRANDING AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY: A STUDY OF GLOBALCOM AND MTN IN KADUNA STATE

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence of employer branding on employee's retention in the telecommunication industry. The survey design was adopted, and data was collected from 144 permanent staff of GLOBACOM Communications and MTN Communications within Kaduna metropolis. Multiple regression was used for data analysis. The findings reveal that employer branding significantly influence Employee Retention of telecommunication industry in Nigeria. In line with the conclusions of the study, it recommends that the management of the telecommunication sector should formulate a policy that would boost the Management value and Work-life balance of the employees since Management value and Work-life balance of the employee increases the companies' Employee retention.

Key Words: Work-life Balance, Employer Branding, Employee Retention, GLOBACOM Communications, MTN Communications

Introduction

Employer branding describes the brand influence of an employer to attract potential employees and at the same time, maintain the current employees. Liu, Ko & Chapleo (2017) explain that employer branding is define as the process of applying marketing branding principles to Strategic Human Resource Management to distinguish firms from competing firms by inviting, inspiring and engaging both potentials, as well as existing employees. Employer branding is thus an interesting topic because it integrates two significant organization areas in the form of branding and human resources.

Cifci & Erdogan (2016) explain that employer branding is focus on a firm's individuality and uniqueness. The employer brand puts forth an image showing the attractiveness of the organization. Some previous studies have concluded organization as a brand only relates to its characteristics that may include quality and innovativeness based on corporate values, culture, programs, and most importantly, its people. In current times, employer branding is being used as a new tactic to attract new, talented and qualified employees along with ensuring the loyalty of the existing ones. So, it is not only an employee seeking strategy, but also a plan to provide a trustworthy and appealing reputation of the organization (Evans, Bridson & Rentschler, 2012).

Employee retention refers to the effort an organization makes to retain its employees. An organization can maintain a working environment that supports current staff in remaining with the company. Employee retention focuses on keeping employees, exceptionally talented ones that contribute to the success of the organization. For decades corporations have invested with in promoting efforts and creation of strong brands so as to accumulate and retain customers. In recent times organizations have completed the worth of exploitation these promoting efforts in personnel management. Even as robust shopper brands influence growth and produce profits to corporations it's simple that a robust employer complete has an influence on business outcomes. Creating the utilization expertise distinctive, by generating and human activity an employment price proposition, employers are ready to produce brand equity increasing retention of workers.

In spite of the growing emphasis on employer branding practice, studies on its relationship with employee retention is few. Empirical studies are still relatively inadequate (Cable & Turban, 2001; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; & Davies, 2007) opine in agreement that employer brand as a concept and its

theoretical foundation in the academics is gradually being developed. Although the study of organizational attraction has revealed some insights, there remains much to be learned (Barber, 1998). One stream of extant research investigates organizational characteristics and their effects on branding to the organization. Structural attributes such as decentralized decision making and reward system (Bretz, 1989), are shown to influence perceptions of retention. The emphasis of employer branding among HR practitioners and the lack of empirical studies on the topic raises interesting questions for management scholars. This study therefore seeks to examine the effect of employer branding on retaining employees in the telecommunication industry in the Nigerian context.

Concept of Employer Branding

There is no one definition for employer branding. Various attempts have been made by several individuals to define employer branding. Knippenberg & Sleebos (2006) were among the first academics to acknowledge the concept of employer branding, recognizing its ability to attract potential employees and retain current talent. They defined employer branding initially as a package of benefits which is provided by an employer during employment or as "the package of functional economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company. They also viewed employer branding as "the set of functional, economic and psychological assistance provided by employment, and recognized with the employing company".

According to Gilliver (2009) employer brand identifies an organization in the marketplace and makes it unique. It gives everyone in the organization a handle on what we are, and everyone interested in joining the organization a clear picture of what to expect. It infuses the firm's recruitment process and the interaction among people in the organization. Brands are among a firm's most valuable assets. Although firms commonly focus their branding efforts toward developing product and corporate brands, branding can also be used in the area of human resource management. The application of branding principles to human resource management has been termed "employer branding." Increasingly, firms are using employer branding to attract recruits and ensure that current employees are engaged in the culture and the strategy of the firm. Ambler & Barrow (1996) first applied the concept of brand to HRM, viewing the employer as the brand and employees as customers. They define the employer brand as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company". Employer brand therefore provides both economic and psychological benefits to employees.

Terglav, Konecnik & Kase (2016) proposed that employer branding is the development of an organization's image and reputation as a prospective employer, and would affect its ability to retain employees. Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees (2013) define employer branding as "a targeted long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular company. Another research by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) stated that employer branding is the process in which an identifiable and unique identity as an employer is developed.

Employer branding concept was emphasized due to the growing competition among rival companies which required talent to compete and achieve growth and sustainability (Mosley, 2007). In the 1990s, most business websites only posted advertisements in favour of their organization without any input from other third parties. Still, today's fast pace innovation in web-based technology and electronic media has allowed two-way traffic, meaning that the employers and outside parties (employees, customer and others) can also share their views related to the firm, its brands and offerings. It has a significant impact on employer brands and in their ability to attract and maintain better skilled and able employees (Yang, Wan & Wu, 2015).

Employer branding consists of the following dimensions: Interest Value; Social Value; Economic Value; Development Value; Application Value; Management Value and Work-life Balance (Anisimova & Mavondo, 2010). This paper views employer branding as a unique identity of a company

that sets it apart from its competitors. The study examines three aspects of the independent variable (employer branding) namely economic value, management value and work-life.

Concept of Employee Retention

Baumgarth & Schmidt (2017) explain that employee retention is a systematic effort by employers to create and foster an environment that encourages current employees to remain employed by having policies and practices in place that address their diverse needs. It is a known fact that retaining the best employees ensures customer satisfaction, increased product sales, satisfied colleagues and reporting staff, effective succession planning and deeply imbedded organizational knowledge and learning. Retention of excellent employees is critical to the long-term health and success of any organization. Hence, failing to retain a key employee is a costly proposition for an organization. Studies by Chang, Chiang & Han (2015) and Gromark & Melin (2013) suggest that losing a middle manager in most organizations costs up to five times of his salary. The performance of employees is often linked directly to quality work, customer satisfaction, and increased product sales and even to the image of a company. Whereas the same is often indirectly related to, satisfied colleagues and reporting staff, effective succession planning and deeply imbedded organizational knowledge and learning.

Employee retention is defined as “a technique adopted by businesses to maintain an effective workforce and at the same time, meet operational requirements” (Matanda & Ndubisi, 2013). Urde & Koch (2014) explain employee retention as “a process in which the employees are encouraged to remain with the organization for the maximum period or until the completion of the project”. Presently, employees have become opportunistic which means they are not confine to work with a single employer, due to a wide range of employment options available to them for switching their jobs, which is a challenge for the employers in the context of retention of the current workforce (Sunder, Kumar, Goreczny & Maurer, 2017).

Companies that have a sound organizational brand offer their employees influential culture, values and vision. To keep employees and keep satisfaction high, you need to implement each of the three R's of employee retention: Respect, Recognition, and Rewards. Respect is esteem, special regard, or particular consideration given to people. It is the foundation of keeping your employees. Recognition and Rewards will have little effect if employees are not respected. Recognition is defined as “special notice or attention” and “the act of perceiving clearly.” Many problems with retention and morale occur because management is not paying attention to people's needs and reactions. Rewards are the extra perks you offer beyond the basics of respect and recognition that make it worth employee's while to work hard, to care, to go beyond what is expected of them. The definition considered for this study describes employee retention as, “a systematic effort to create and foster an environment that encourages employees to remain employed by having policies and practices in place that address their diverse needs”.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study includes Social exchange theory and Reciprocity theory. Social exchange theory explains “social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties” (Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng, 2010). For this study, this theory is use to indicate a consensual, equally depending and gratifying process mainly involving transactions and, or simply exchange. Additionally, Reciprocity theory states that “reciprocity is a social rule which implies that one should repay and individuals/people reward kind actions and punish the unkind ones” (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000).

Both of the theories as mentioned earlier concurrently provide a sound base for the current study. Organizations are social entities and are form only when the interaction occurs among the individuals, that is, the employer and the employees. This interaction is mainly social and is based on culture and formal and informal affiliations among employer and employees within the work setting. Based on the

theory it is assumed that the organization must maintain a strong employer brand which can only be achieved through providing its employees with a strong sense of belonging through its core values, vision and mission which results in increased levels of employees' commitment and loyalty. By doing so, employees become an excellent tool for the preservation of reputation and image in the market. Also, reciprocity theory in organizations involves the actions and reactions on the part of the employer and employees. It explains the exchange between organizations that maintain a strong employer brand and employees that repay with higher loyalty and commitment, thereby enabling firms to maintain higher levels of employee retention.

External marketing of the employer brand establishes the firm as an employer of choice and thereby enables it to attract the best possible workers. The characteristics of MTN and GLOBACOM telecommunication companies' resources can contribute to sustainable competitive advantage. Debatably, the possession of resources that are rare, valuable, non-substitutable and difficult to imitate move these firms ahead of their competitors.

Effect of Employer Branding on Employee Retention

Work-life balance is increasingly essential for engagement and affects retention. Donovan, Janda & Suh (2006) in their empirical research in the UK, found that interventions of work demands into the personal life (e.g. working during the weekend) resulted into heightened stress and emotional exhaustion among the employees. In a study conducted by DeConinck (2011), it was found that 70% of businesses that incorporated tele-work options reported several positive benefits, such as increased business productivity and reduced costs, improved employee flexibility and work-life balance, and increased workforce participation.

According to Hirvonen & Laukkanen (2014), employees get benefited by the work environment that provides a sense of belonging. Hughes & Ahearne (2010) stated in their study that organizations that have generous human resource policies, have an excellent chance to satisfy and retain employees by providing them with an appropriate level of privacy and sound control on work environment which enhances the motivation levels to commit with the organization for the long term. Kimpakorn & Tocquer (2009) stressed the need for recognizing the individual needs of an employee in an organization as it will encourage commitment and provide a suitable work environment.

King & Grace (2008) found that one of the crucial factors in employee retention is an investment in employee training and career development. The Organization frequently invests in the form of training and development of those workers from whom they expect to return and give output on its investment. Spector & Brannick (2011) asserted that organizations can keep the leading edge in this competitive world by having their employees well trained in the latest technologies. Subramony & Holtom (2012) explained that in today's competitive environment feedback is essential for organizations from employees and the more knowledge the employee learn, the more he or she will perform and meet the global challenges of the market place. Hancock, Allen, Bosco & Pierce (2013) mentioned that proper innovation, and assimilation of new knowledge is essential for survival in any work environment. This knowledge is the most expensive asset of any firm.

Moroko & Uncles (2008) suggested that their relationship with the supervisor strongly influences employee's perception regarding an organization. Ashforth, Harrison & Corley (2008) mentioned in his study on Leadership behaviour of hospital directors found that there is a significant positive relation between productivity, worker satisfaction and organizational commitment of staff. Aurand, Gorchels & Bishop (2005) were of the view that supervision of the immediate manager increases the level of job satisfaction in the public sector employees. Baumgarth, Merrilees & Urde (2013) found that leadership style can affect organizational commitment and work satisfaction positively and work satisfaction can affect organizational commitment and work performance confidently.

Anderson & Gerbing (1988) found during the study of Japanese workers that employment features like lifetime employment and seniority system, job security lead to higher commitment, job satisfaction as well as retention of employees in an organization. Researchers such as Ashforth, Harrison & Corley (2008) conducted studies on job security and job satisfaction and found that that job dissatisfaction is the outcome of insecurity among employees. Bloemer & Odekerken-Schroder (2006) did research on job insecurity and found that job performance and organizational commitment are negatively correlated with job insecurity. In the age of cut-throat competition, every organization tries their best to give the best facilities to its employees. Satisfying the human sources is one of the toughest tasks which majority of the organizations faces today.

Baxter, Kerr & Clarke (2015) suggest that the success of a business can depend on its capability to attract and retain employees, thus identifying the growing importance of employer branding and emphasizing how effective employer branding leads to competitive advantage. Boone (2000) explains how employer branding has progressively become an important factor for success within organizations and how it has captured significant attention in recent years. He further expressed that employer branding is being use to appeal to potential employees while also engaging current employees within an organization. Moroko & Uncles (2008) established that an employer brand aim is to become an employer of choice.

Companies should understand employer branding, as it is the instrument that allows firms to show how they differentiate themselves from competitors (Baumgarth, Merrilees & Urde, 2013). Likewise, employer branding helps to improve organizational performance within the context of HR in areas such as recruitment, retention, and engagement, by allowing them to differentiate themselves from competitors (Sunder, Kumar, Goreczny & Maurer, 2017). Moroko & Uncles (2008) identified the positive influence of employer branding on employee's perceived loyalty, retention, satisfaction, affinity with the employer, and differentiation from other competitor brands. Organizations which actively use employer branding are thought to benefit from increased interest from potential employees and higher levels of loyalty and commitment from current employees (Hirvonen & Laukkanen, 2014). The employer brand should initially be communicated through core values, and it should represent an organization's culture, to enable employers to benefit (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Cardy & Lengnick-Hall (2011) additionally argued that, if done correctly, employer branding can retain the best people by providing an environment that allows employees to live the brand through various aspects such as training and progression which increases their satisfaction and likelihood of remaining employed with the organization (Cifci & Erdogan, 2016). The positive outcomes that employer branding has on an organization are indicated in Gromark & Melin (2013) 'Employer Brand Model' which identifies that commitment, retention, performance, satisfaction, attraction, and loyalty can all be linked back to the employer brand. Baumgarth, Merrileesand & Urde (2013) support the model by recognizing that employer branding increases employee morale and satisfaction, which in turn improves retention. Moreover, employer branding heightens employee morale, and it was suggested that employees who enjoy working for an organization subconsciously become brand ambassadors (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2017). Employees then praise and recommend the company to family and friends, but also remain loyal to the organization for a more extended period (Cifci & Erdogan, 2016). Employers do this by recognizing the areas in which they provide a unique employment experience, looking at the tangible and intangible benefits they offer (Mosley, 2007).

Methodology

This study employed survey design. Data was collected from a primary source in the form of questionnaires administered. The population consists of all the 232-permanent staff of GLOBACOM Communications and MTN Communications within Kaduna metropolis. The study employed two criteria to arrive at the sample. One, the staff must work at one at these telecommunications industries for more than five (5) years. Two, they are permanent staff in the organization. A population of 36 staff fit the

criteria at GLOBACOM and 108 at MTN making a total of 144 staff altogether, and they were used as the sample size. The study employs the multiple regression as the tool for data analysis using SPSS version 20. A questionnaire that consisted of four parts was administered to the respondents, which included demographics, employer branding variables and employer retention. A total of 12 items of questions and a five-point likert scale was used (1-Strongly Disagree, and 5- Strongly Agree) to measure the outcome. In this work, both the descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The descriptive statistics summarizes the essential characteristics of the data such as averages, standard deviation, minimum and maximum, among others. Pearson correlation was used as part of the descriptive statistics to establish the relationship between employer branding and employee retention. Various robustness (validity) tests were adopted in this research, which includes the test for normality of residuals using residual plot, linearity check through the use of scatter plot, multicollinearity test using the variance inflation factor (VIF). All these tests are conducted to ascertain the fitness of the model and reliability of findings.

Data Analysis

The following model was developed to test the null hypotheses, which states that employer branding does not have a significant impact on employee retention.

Employee Retention = f(Employer branding)

Employee Retention = f(Economic Value + Management value + Work life Balance

$$ER_{it} = \alpha_0 + \beta_{1it}EV_{it} + \beta_2MV_{it} + \beta_3WB_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where:

EB is employer branding; ER is employee retention; EV is economic value; MV is Management value; WB is Work-life balance. $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ are the co-efficient of the explanatory variables and ε_{it} is the error term. i at time t indicating that the data is a panel.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Attributes	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	111	77.1
	Female	43	29.9
Age	Below 25 years	2	1.4
	25 – 40 years	52	36.1
	41 – 50 years	58	40.3
	Above 50 years	32	22.2
How long have you been working at the company?	5 – 10 years	98	68.1
	Above 10 years	46	31.9
Educational Qualification	Primary School	12	8.3
	Secondary School	24	16.7
	Higher Institution	62	
	Additional Qualification	46	31.9
Position in the organization.	Top Management	30	20.8
	Middle Management	80	55.6
	Lower Management	34	23.6

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

The descriptive statistics show that there were 77.1% males and 29.9% females. The minimum age bracket was below 25 years which had 1.4% and the maximum age bracket as 41 – 50 years. 68.1% have been working between 5 -10 years and 31.9% have been working for over 10 years. 43.1% have had qualifications in higher institutions, while 8.3% have had only primary school qualifications. 55.6% of the respondents were in middle management, while 23.6% are in top management and 20.8% in top management.

Table 2: Summary of Correlation Matrix Result

	ER	EV	MV	WB
ER	1			
EV	-0.1406	1		
MV	0.0436	0.1119	1	
WB	0.1721	0.0172	-0.1167	1

Source: Researchers' Compilation, using Stata 13 (2020)

A look at the pattern of the correlation between independent and dependent variables shows that none of the explanatory variables is approaching 0.8 or higher. Table 2 indicates that Employee Retention is 0.0436 and 0.1721 positively correlated with the MV and WB, while EV is negatively correlated with ER. WB is 0.0172 correlated with EV, while MV is 0.1119 negatively correlated with EV. The relationship between the independent variables themselves was found to be significantly related. This may not be enough to conclude that harmful multicollinearity exist among the independent variables of the study until the variance inflation factor and the tolerance values are far and above the expected limit. The V I F and the tolerance are two advance measures of assessing multicollinearity between the regressors. The V I F and the tolerance are computed and are found to be consistently smaller than one and ten respectively, which indicates absence of harmful multicollinearity. This shows the appropriateness and fitting of the study model with three independent variables in employer branding and employee retention in telecommunication industry in Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Result

Variables	Coefficient	T-statistics	P-values	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.0236699	2.18	0.033		
EV	-0.001753	-1.89	0.063	0.773174	1.29
MV	-0.001129	-0.16	0.871	0.883727	1.13
WB	0.207763	1.77	0.081	0.93796	1.07
R-Square	0.57				
Adjusted R	0.12				
F Statistics	3.37				
Prob. (F. sig)			0.0144		

Source: Regression Result Output, 2020 using Stata 13 (2020)

Table 3 shows the summary of the estimated regression model which can mathematically be transform as: $ER=0.0236699 -0.00175(EV) -0.001129(MV) +0.207763(WB)$.

The regression result further substantiates the result in table 4.3 on the correlation matrix indicates a complete absence of harmful multicollinearity. From table 4.3, the (VIF) are consistently less than 10 indicating a complete absence of multicollinearity. Besides, the tolerance values are also consistently less than 1.00. From the regression result, the highest tolerance value and VIF are 0.94 and 1.31, respectively. This result shows that there is a complete absence of harmful multicollinearity between the independent variables (Tobachnick, & Fidell, 1996). This further provides evidence that harmful multicollinearity will not affect the inferences drawn from the results of this study.

The coefficient of determination represented by R^2 stood at 17%, which constitutes the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable, which is explained by the independent variable. Therefore, it signifies that 57% changes in Employee Retention are caused by the explanatory variables as used in the study, while the remaining 43% of the changes are caused by other factors outside the model of the study. The F- statistics which shows the overall level significance of the model is 3.37 showing the adequacy and fitness of the model of the study and is significant at 1% level.

Economic Value and Employee Retention

From the regression table above, the beta coefficient of EV is -0.001753 and its p-value is 0.063 (5%) which signifies that there is a negative significant impact between Economic Value and Employee Retention of telecommunication industries in Nigeria. The implication of the above result is that, for every one unit increase in the EV there is an approximately 0.001753 decrease in Employee Retention of telecommunication industries in Nigeria. However, the finding is in line with expectation of the researcher. The policy implication of this finding is, the management of Telecommunication industries should formulate policies aim at increasing the economic value. This finding is in line with the findings of Sanda, Mikailu & Garba (2005), Faruk & Mailafja (2013), Saifullahi, Mohammed & Shehu (2015), Basyith, Fauzi & Idris (2015), whose findings indicate that economic value is negative, and significantly affecting Employee retention of firms and contrary to the findings of Adenikinju & Ayorinde (2001), Zakaria & Purhanudin (2014).

Management Value and Employee Retention

From the regression table, MV has a beta coefficient of -0.001129 with a t-value of -0.16 which is insignificant at 87%. This signifies that, MV is negatively and insignificantly affecting the Employee Retention of telecommunication companies in Nigeria. However, the outcome is contrary to the prior expectation of the study. This finding is also contrary to the finding of Saifullahi, Mohammed & Shehu (2015) that found MV to be positive and significantly affecting the Employee Retention of telecommunication companies in Nigeria.

Work-life Balance and Employee Retention

From the regression table, foreign ownership has a beta coefficient value of 0.0207763 with a t-value of 1.77 and is significant at 10%. It signifies the existence of a positive significant impact between the WB and Employee Retention of telecommunication industries in Nigeria. The implication of the above result is, for an increase WB the Employee Retention of telecommunication industries in Nigeria increases. This finding is in line with the researcher's expectation. The policy implication of this finding is, the management of the Employee Retention of telecommunication sector should formulate policy that would boost the Work life balance of the employees since WB increases the companies' Employee retention. This finding is in line with the finding of Zakaria & Purhanudin (2014) who found that, WB has a positive significant impact on Employee Retention and contrary to the findings of Saifullahi, et al (2015) who found that, WB has a negative significant impact on firms' Employee Retention while Abdulrahman & Reja (2015), found WB to be insignificantly affecting firms' employee retention.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Economic Value contributes negatively to the Employee Retention of telecommunication industries in Nigeria, also the regression result of this study indicate Management Value has a negative insignificant impact on the Employee Retention of telecommunication industries in Nigeria and Work-life balance of employee has a positive impact on their Employee Retention of telecommunication industries in Nigeria. Statistics show that work life balance will favour the Employee Retention of telecommunication industry in Nigeria at a reasonable and considerable point.

Recommendations

In line with the conclusions of the study, it is recommended that the management of the Employee Retention of telecommunication sector should formulate policy that would boost the Management value and Work-life balance of the employees since Management value and Work-life balance of the employee increases the companies' Employee retention. This can be achieved through extensive study of the employees to enable the management formulate a workable strategy that will boost their employee loyalty.

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