

# The Organizational Attraction at Company-owned University

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords:</i>            Organizational attraction,            Employer Knowledge,            recruitment,            sourcing</p> <p>Corresponding author:            rocky@atmajaya.ac.id</p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT</b></p> <p>This study took place in a university established by a company. The aim of this study is to investigate factors which may influence the university students' affect toward the parent company. The construct of interest is organizational attraction, which is the positive attitude of an individual regarding an organization. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this study. The total number of participants in this study was 161 (60 males, 101 females; 84 students who never worked before, 64 worked part time, 13 have worked full time). Results showed the students had neutral attitude toward the organization as a workplace. This indicates that the students do not necessarily prefer the parent company to other companies. Other findings showed the first year students have higher level of organizational attraction compared to final year students, presumably due to word of mouth by the lecturers.</p> <p><b>SARI PATI</b></p> <p><i>Penelitian ini dilakukan pada mahasiswa di universitas yang didirikan oleh sebuah perusahaan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apa yang membuat mahasiswa di universitas tertarik untuk bekerja di perusahaan tersebut. Konstruksi yang digunakan adalah organizational attraction, yaitu sikap positif yang dimiliki seorang individu terhadap sebuah organisasi. Metode penelitian ini adalah mixed method. Responden penelitian ini berjumlah 161 mahasiswa (60 laki-laki dan 101 wanita; 84 mahasiswa belum pernah bekerja, 64 pernah bekerja paruh waktu, dan 13 mahasiswa pernah bekerja waktu penuh). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa bersikap netral terhadap perusahaan sebagai tempat bekerja. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa perusahaan pendiri universitas belum tentu memiliki nilai lebih di mata mahasiswanya jika dibandingkan dengan perusahaan lain. Temuan lain menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa semester awal memiliki ketertarikan yang lebih tinggi dibanding mahasiswa semester akhir terhadap perusahaan sebagai tempat</i></p>

*bekerja. Lebih rendahnya ketertarikan mahasiswa di semester akhir bersumber dari world of mouth tenaga pendidik.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In an ever evolving economic environment, a qualified workforce is necessary for an organization to thrive. Since 2011, this situation has led to a talent war in Indonesia (Fajar, 2011). Talent war is a circumstance where various industrial sectors compete to obtain highly skilled potential employees. As a result, organizations have to exert extra effort to find the best talent using various means. One of the strategies is assembling their own potential employee resources by establishing an educational institution.

Recently a number of organizations in Indonesia have started establishing their own educational institution. These universities are established as a business unit as well as a sourcing tool for the company. Moreover, companies could also adjust the curriculum of the universities to fit the companies' need. This strategy is done to ensure their graduates would be better prepared to apply what they have learned in the industrial context relevant to the companies. In practice, this was done by establishing academic departments based on the business process of the parent company. For example, a university owned by a journalism company may emphasize on its department of journalism and media studies. Some parent companies also made use of their own employees as lecturers, so the employees could use their real work experiences as examples to accommodate better learning. This concept is similar to corporate universities commonly found in the United States.

Using these strategies, companies expected the graduates of their universities would be more prepared to work in their respective industries. However, one variable which could not be

predicted is the students' willingness to work in their companies after they graduate. One of such university in Indonesia found that there are only 18% graduates who apply to work in its parent company. Therefore, companies made various programs to increase their organizational attraction among the students of their universities.

The act of engaging skilled potential employees to work in an organization through proactive searching is called sourcing. Companies used programs such as seminars, job exhibitions, company visit, scholarship, internships, branding value, and other company branding strategies. These activities are expected to increase the students' interest to work in the company which established their university. Despite these enormous efforts, companies still have difficulties attracting their students to work with them. This may be due to the fact that other companies, ones who did not establish the university, also use the same strategy. Therefore the students do not necessarily perceive the company who established their university as more salient or more preferable than other companies.

In dealing with this problem, company who established a university may have to use different sourcing strategies in order to distinguish themselves from other companies. For example, since students are already familiar with the name and image of the company who establish their university, company may need to use a strategy aimed more at increasing the students' interest to work with them. Using dubious assumptions to determine the most appropriate strategy may result in losing a lot of investments due to inapt sourcing method. Therefore, a comprehensive description of the students' interest in the company who

established their university is needed as the basis in making strategic sourcing decisions.

In the last few years, there has been increasing amount of research which studied how university students could perceive an organization as preferable (Slaughter & Greguras, in Arciniega & Maldonado, 2011). To describe how a student could be interested to work in an organization, one of the most frequently used construct is organizational attraction (OA). OA is an attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an organization and toward viewing the organization as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship (Aiman Smith *et al.*, in Catanzaro, Moore, Marshall, & Timothy, 2010). OA was found to be strongly correlated to a person's choice to apply for a job in that organization (Rau & Hyland, in Muniz, 2007). OA was also discovered as the key process in the attraction-selection-attrition cycle (Schneider, in Catanzaro, Moore, Marshall, & Timothy, 2010). In the attraction phase, job seeker considers whether his personal needs values are in line with that of the organization.

A number of researches studied the mechanism of how OA could explain a job seeker's interest in an organization. Phillips and Gully (2014) investigated the effectiveness of job vacancy advertisements in the recruitment process, involving 332 job seekers. From this study, it was found that the type of information given on a job vacancy ads could increase or decrease the organizational attraction of the company. In this study, participants were presented with two vacancy ads: one which describes a small company looking for creative employees, and the other describes a large company looking for hardworking individuals. The result of the study revealed a difference between the organizational attraction of job seekers who put more focus on learning rather than performance. Learning-oriented job seekers were more attracted to the small company ad, whereas the performance-oriented job seekers were more attracted to the large company ads.

Further analysis also showed that the biggest difference was found in the prestige domain of the OA model.

Other study, conducted by Anderson, Haar, and Gibb (2010), tried to explain the relationship between OA and personality traits. It involved a diverse sample of 634 people from different cultural backgrounds. The result of this study revealed that personality traits could be generalized outside of the United States, and that traits were correlated with OA. Other study by Lyons & Marler (2011) investigated how a company website could affect OA. It used 320 college graduates who were seeking employment. The results showed that organizational image mediated the relationship of perceived person-job fit with OA. Furthermore, the researchers of this study recommended companies to assess the job seekers regarding their website because what they put on their website could affect the job seekers' perception and attitude toward their company. Zhang & Marry (2011) tried to explain how corporate social responsibility (CSR) was associated with job seekers using the OA theory. From this study it was discovered that job seekers were more interested in companies who conduct CSR parallel to their interests.

Based on these studies, we could conclude that in the last few years many researches have been done to explain job seekers' behavior using the OA theory. Ryan & Nancy (2004) stated that these researches showed us how psychology could help organizations attracting and selecting highly skilled candidates using OA to predict potential employees. While theoretically OA only played a part in the early process of job seeking, it was found that this construct could predict job seekers' behavior better than intention theory.

### **Organization Attraction**

Organization attraction (OA) is positive attitude that individual have toward an organization (Aiman-Smith *et al.*, in Catanzaro, Moore, Marshall, & Timothy, 2010). The area of OA research explain

what makes individual want to apply for a job in an organization. OA researches also provide explanations on what variable is affecting an individual's perception of organization, and how that perception can influence the individual's intention to apply for or accept a job. OA was divided to 3 facets: general attractiveness, intention to pursue, and prestige (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). These 3 facets were developed from several researches and then constructed to be a scale. At a glance it may be perceived as similar to intention theory from Fishbein and Ajzen (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). General attractiveness is similar to attitude, as intention to pursue to affective and attitudinal factors, and prestige to perception of social norms. These three facets try to explain how job seekers could be attracted to a certain organization from meaningful symbols associated to it (Lievens, & Highhouse, 2003).

### Employer Knowledge

Employer knowledge was developed by Cable & Turban (2001) to explain the concept of recruitment. This concept was developed from brand equity and brand knowledge theory that in recruitment were called recruitment equity. Recruitment equity is the employer knowledge of job seekers that they get before and after they were involved in the recruitment process. Employer knowledge (EK) is job seekers' memories and associations that they have regarding an organization. EK influence how job seekers process and react to information about the organization. For example, when a job seeker was given a brochure about an organization she would recall her memories that are most strongly related to that organization. Her reaction to the brochure would be based on that stored memories. EK is divided to 3 facets (Cable & Turban, 2001):

1. Employer familiarity is the level of awareness that a job seeker has of an organization. The lowest level is unawareness or a complete lack of familiarity. A slightly higher level of familiarity is what has been labeled recognition, where a job seeker recognizes the name of the

employer based on some minimal level of prior exposure to the organization. A higher level of familiarity is recall that job seeker is familiar enough with an employer that they can recall the name of the employer when prompted with some salient fact about the firm. The first form that is recalled by the job seeker has top of the mind awareness, which is the highest level of awareness.

2. Employer image is the content of the beliefs held by a job seeker about an employer. It includes three images: employer information, job information, and people information. Employer information refers to objective aspects of organizations, ranging from factual or historical attributes to company policies, procedures, and norm. Job information is job seekers; knowledge about the attributes of a specific job at the form that they might be interested in obtaining. People information refers to the type of individuals that comprise an organization and who would be potential co-workers to a job seeker.
3. Employer reputation is a job seeker's beliefs about the public's affective evaluation of the organization. It is distinguished from employer image in two important ways. First image does not include an affective evaluation component whereas reputation does and employer reputation is a job seeker's belief about how the organization is evaluated by others.

### METHODS

This research used mixed method explanatory sequential designs. First, we took quantitative data to describe organizational attraction. Secondly, we took qualitative data to give more meaning to the quantitative data (Creswell, 2012). For this research we used questionnaire as the tools for quantitative method. Interview was used for the qualitative method. Due to practical reasons, only some of the respondents were selected to be interviewed. We categorize the respondents into

two groups (high OA and low OA) and selected a few respondents from each group. Convenience sampling was used for the sampling method. Using this sampling method, we involved samples from a part of the population what was easy to reach (Howitt& Cramer, 2011). For qualitative method we used intensity sampling, which means we chose information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely (Patton, 2002).

**Sample**

The sample of this research consisted of 161 students (60 males and 101 females) in a university owned by a news company. This company founded this university as one of its business units and a part of its sourcing strategy. The university has 4 majors. 3 respondents were used for interview. They were selected from people that had high and low score of organizational attraction questionnaire.

**Instrument**

To measure attraction, we used the Organization Attraction Scale which was developed by Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar (2003). It consisted of 15 Likert scale items, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale was adapted to Indonesian and has validity score of 0.654 and

reliability score of 0.928. For example, one of the items is “Bagi saya, perusahaan X akan menjadi tempat yang baik untuk bekerja” (“For me, company X would be a good place at work”). As for the interview, we made an interview guide that used employer knowledge theory. The purpose of this interview was to investigate the factors that made respondent attracted or not attracted in that company. One example of the question was “Informasi apa yang anda ketahui tentang perusahaan X? (What do you know about company X?)”.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Findings on OA**

Descriptive statistics of OA obtained from all participants are presented in Figure 1, which showed scores ranging from 34 to 75 and averaging at 55.65. These scores indicate that students had moderate organizational attraction toward the company that builds their university. This level meant they had a neutral attitude regarding the company X as a place of work.

**Findings on the domains of OA**

OA consists of three dimensions: general attractiveness, intention to pursue, and prestige. To obtain a comprehensive description of each domains, we tested them using one-way ANOVA (Table 1).

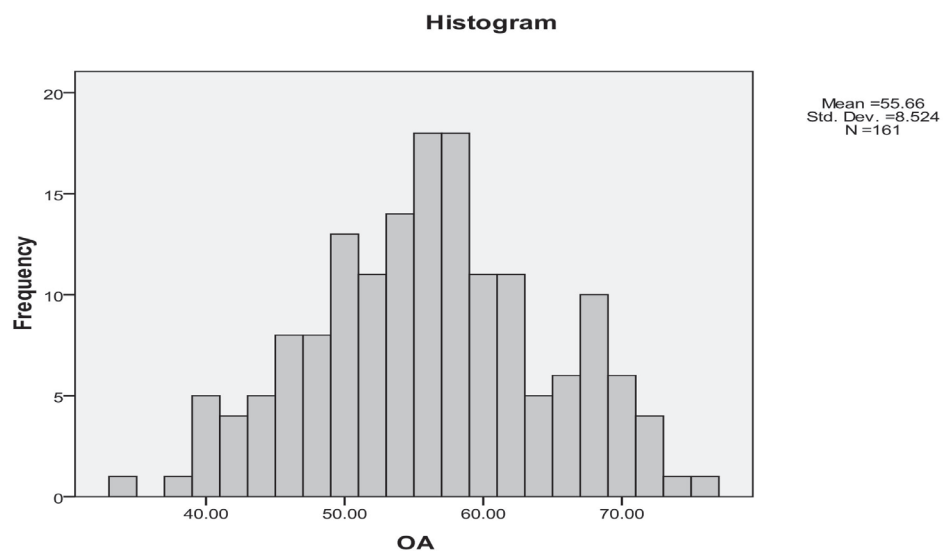


Figure 1. OA score distribution

Table 1. One-way ANOVA analysis on the domains of OA

<b>ANOVA</b>				
<b>Total dimensions</b>				
	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	130.398	65.199	6.260	.002
Within Groups	4999.00	10.415		
Total	5129.40			

Table 2. *Post-hoc* analysis on the differences between each OA domain

<b>Multiple Comparisons</b>				
Scheffe				
(I) dimension	(J) dimension	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
general attractiveness	Intention to pursue	-.40994	.35969	.523
	prestige	-1.24845*	.35969	.003
Intention to pursue	general attractiveness	.40994	.35969	.523
	prestige	-.83851	.35969	.067
prestige	general attractiveness	1.24845*	.35969	.003
	Intention to pursue	.83851	.35969	.067

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Based on the analysis, a significant difference was discovered on each domains (F = 6.26, sig. = 0.002). We also used post-hoc analysis for further investigation on the differences (Table 2).

Analysis on the domains level revealed that significant differences were only found on the prestige and general attractiveness domain (sig = 0.003). The prestige domain had significantly higher scores than general attractiveness. This indicates that compared to other domains, prestige was the main contributing factor to a students' organizational attraction toward a company. Lowest scores were found on the general attractiveness domain. General attractiveness is an individual's initial attitude toward a company as a potential place of work, while prestige reflects social status of the organization such as reputation, popularity, and status (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). Therefore, the results of this study showed that when considering a company as a

place of work, students pay more attention to its reputation instead of their initial attitude. This also showed that social influence is a more salient factor to OA than general information regarding the company.

#### **T-Test and ANOVA analysis based on years in college**

Statistical analysis was done using one way ANOVA on the OA scores based on the year they began college. We classified the students to four groups, from the youngest group who began college in 2015 (i.e. the freshmen), those who began in 2014 (i.e. sophomores), those who began in 2013 (i.e. juniors), and those who began in 2011 or older (i.e. seniors). Based on this analysis, a significant difference was found between each category at the p<.05 level [F (4, 156) = 3.4, p = 0.011]. This result suggests students from different year groups have different OA level. We presented this difference on Figure 2.

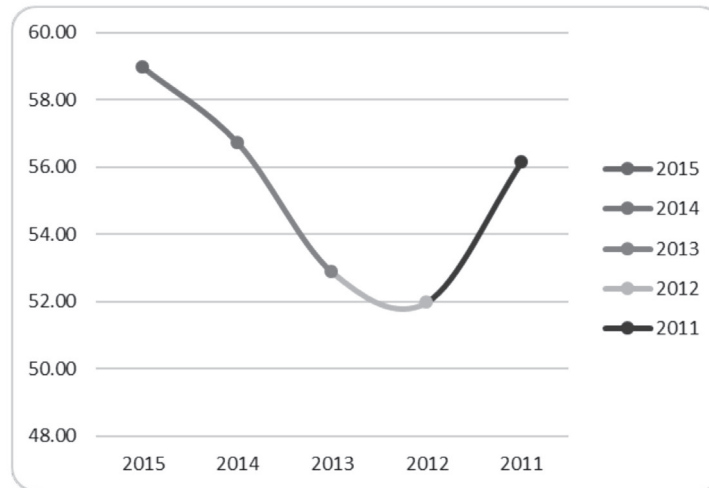


Figure 2. Means of OA between students from different year groups

The figure above showed means of OA between each year groups. Based on the graph we could see that students who have been in college for longer had lower level of OA. Further investigation revealed that students were exposed to informations about the company during classes, as stated by one of the interviewee:

“Lecturers showed us an article that although PT X would give you huge salary and it pays attention to the employee’s well-being, there’s politics and red tapes behind the clean image of PT X. I merely remember a small part of that article; I’ll email it to you later. Basically it says that people who work at PT X were divided into their own community, and those communities don’t *get along* very well.” (RK, communication major student)

When we looked further into the article mentioned by the student, we found that it contained information regarding the parent company which may be perceived as negative. It stated that the company was a hierarchical organization and decision-making structure was centralized. The article concluded that such conditions made decision making process slow and susceptible to political manipulation. This information made the student had negative perception on the parent company as a place of work.

We also conducted interviews on participants with high level of OA, and it was revealed that these students were exposed to both positive and negative informations regarding the company during courses. Therefore, from the interview process, we inferred that both positive and negative information given by the lecturer was one of the factors affecting students’ OA level. These informations were given to them by the lecturers, who also worked at the company as employees. Since most of the informations were negative, students who have went through college longer (i.e. the seniors) were exposed to more negative information on the parent company, hence the lower level of OA.

As for the seniors (participants who started college in 2011 or earlier), we found higher OA level compared to the sophomores. This may due to the fact that they would be graduating soon and started to consider factors outside OA in choosing a place of work.

#### Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted on three participants: two participants with high OA level and one with low OA level. The result of this analysis is presented on the table 3.

Table 3. The difference of OA between interviewees

Domains of EK	Themes	
	High level of OA	Low level of OA
Employer Familiarity	- Respondent is in the top of the mind category	- Respondent is in the recognition category
Employer Information	- Respondents had knowledge on the history and have had exposure with the company X products - Respondents had knowledge of negative informations regarding the work process of the company X	- Respondents' knowledge were based solely on the product of the company X
Job Information	- Respondents were interested in the company X due to company concern to the employee's well-being, as reflected in salary and workload settings - Respondents were interested in the company X for the chance to get a scholarship and the flexible work hours - Respondents were exposed to informations surrounding the company X from their lecturers	- Respondent was only told by his/her lecturers that the the employees of the parent company were loyal due to the company X policy
People Information	- Respondent had no knowledge of the work situation in the company X - Respondent was hesitant about his/her competence to apply for a job in the company X - Respondent perceived power distribution as equal between senior and junior employees in the company X	- Respondent had no knowledge of the work situation in the company X
Employer Reputation	- Respondent had the support of family and friends to work in the company X due to its reputation as a stable corporation - Respondent was interested to work in the company X due to its reputation as a contributor to the country - Respondent was aware of the company X reputation from one of the company's product, a daily newspaper.	- Respondent assumed the company X as a company who was only in the journalism industry
Individual Preference	- Respondent was attracted to companies aligned with his interests, whose employees had the same goal as he, and whose products were widely preferred by a wide segment.	- Respondent had a career aspiration as a cartoonist and parent company was perceived as unable to fulfill his/her career goal - Respondent wanted a more strict working environment (such as fixed deadlines and schedules) and equal power distribution between senior and junior employees - Respondent perceived the company X as a typical journalistic company and he/she avoided this industry



Respondents with high and low OA had different informations and different attitude toward those informations. This difference could be found on each domains of their employer knowledge. In the employer familiar domain, we found different level of familiarity on the company X as a place of work. Respondents with high OA made the company X their most favorable company, while respondents with low OA was less familiar with the company X.

On the employer information domain, we found difference between respondents with high OA and low OA. Respondents who had high OA level had more information on the company X, especially its reputation as a company and its products. These informations were both positive and negative. In contrast, respondent who had low OA had limited informations on the company X, namely only one of its products.

Similar finding was also discovered on the job information domain. Respondents with high level of OA reported more information on salary, workload, benefit, and preferable work process. Respondents with low OA were merely aware of the company X high employee loyalty, without knowing what causes the loyalty. The similarity between all respondents was they obtain these informations from their lecturers.

Respondents with high and low OA showed similarity in the people information domain. They all admitted to not having information regarding work situation in the company X. However, a respondent in the high OA group mentioned that he/she had interacted with some senior employees during a part time job at the company X. This interaction, along with the experience he/she gained at that job had a positive effect on his/her OA level toward the company X as a place of work.

On the employer reputation dimension, we found similarity in each response. Every

respondent perceived the company X as a journalism company. The differentiating factor was whether or not this perception aligns with their own interests. Respondent with high OA reported higher interest in the journalism industry, therefore he expressed interest to work in the company X. This finding relevant to Awang & Jusoff (2009) who found company reputation is also an important factor for employee branding. In contrast, the respondent with low OA expressed no interest in the journalism world and tends to overgeneralize the company X business as journalism. This perception made him/her unpersuaded to look for more information regarding the company X. This finding shows that strong reputation in company X affecting student to make image for journalistic although company X has another business other from journalistic. This Strong dimension make less attractive to another dimension (Franca, 2012).

When we investigate the individual preferences of the respondents, we found a common theme in the responses. All participants expressed intention to pursue a career in a well known company, who had a reputation of wide segments and diverse products. The difference between the two categories was respondents with high OA preferred a cooperative work environment (where teams were formed to achieve a common goal/deadline), while respondents with low OA preferred a more individual work environment (where each employee would be given individual deadline).

#### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This study provides practitioners with advice concerning how they should strategically manage their image to maximize recruiting effectiveness. The results of this study showed that informations about the company X were given to students during classes, which could alter the students' perception of the company. Sourcing programs (such as seminars, job fairs, and company visits) weren't the only source of information, since lecturers who also work as the company's

employees also impart knowledge regarding the company. Therefore, companies who use universities as a sourcing tool need to make sure students were given positive information about the company. We recommend parent companies to have a system that could manage the informations spread to student.

Our findings also suggest that word of mouth from the lecturers had great impact on student. Therefore, companies who use word of mouth as a branding tool may want to use lecturers as ambassadors to make the strategy more effective. Lecturers can be used to advertise the company and give positive informations regarding work situations, work process, and overall work environment. However, this strategy has to be planned carefully as it may backfire if students perceived the lecturers as insincere in advertising the company. A study by Van Hoye, Weijters, Lievens, & Stockman (2016) showed that word of mouth may give negative implication if the senders of the message were known to be given incentives. To counter this, companies may enhance the lecturers' employer image by increasing job satisfaction among the workers because satisfied employees spread more positive informations and less negative word of mouth (Van Hoye, 2013). By doing this, lecturers would be more likely to voluntarily advertise the company without feeling obligated.

## **CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study is to investigate what causes a student to be interested in working with a company. From analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, it was discovered that students had moderate OA with regard to the company who established their university. This indicates that the students had neutral attitude toward the company X as a place of work.

Further investigation into the students' OA also discovered a difference of OA level between

students from different year groups. By categorizing the students into four year groups (i.e. freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors), we were able to see a pattern where the juniors (students in their third year) had the lowest OA compared to students from other year groups. Qualitative data showed that this pattern emerged due to the informations exposed to the students from their lecturers, who also worked as employees of the company X. These lecturers informed the students of work situations in the company X, and may have unknowingly altered the students' initial neutral attitude toward the company X as a place of work. Our findings were supported by Uen, Peng, Chen, & Chien (2011) who studied the affect of word of mouth on organizational attractiveness. Moreover, the results of their study showed that the person who delivered the message was also of importance. Significant people who were seen as expert had more impact on the message. We found similar situation in our study, where lecturers were perceived as experts on their fields and have had first-hand experience of working in the company X.

We also found different amount of information between students who were interested and uninterested to the company X as a place of work. Students with high OA had more knowledge of the work situations, work process, and products of the company. This findings was in line with the employer knowledge theory (Cable & Turban, 2001), which stated that familiarity with the name of a company preceded employer image and employer knowledge. In other words, an individual must be familiar with the name of a company before he/she could memorize informations regarding that company. Companies who established universities may use these findings as considerations in planning sourcing strategy, for example by increasing their students' familiarity before apprising them with information about the company. ■

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