

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OPTIMIZATION STRATEGY IN IMPROVING CUSTOMER RETENTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF ITB STIKOM BALI JIMBARAN CAMPUS

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Abstract

Competition among higher education institutions in Indonesia demands that educational organizations deliver superior learning experiences to maintain student retention. This study aims to analyze the influence of academic service quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and social interaction on student retention at ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus. The research employs a mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, involving 250 active students from the odd semester of 2025/2026 across four study programs. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews to strengthen empirical findings. Results indicate that all four variables significantly and positively influence student retention both partially and simultaneously, contributing 89.5 percent of the variance. Administrative support demonstrates the strongest influence, followed by academic service quality, social interaction, and campus facilities. These findings confirm that holistic customer experience, encompassing academic, administrative, facility, and social aspects, serves as a key determinant in enhancing student retention. This research contributes to the development of a customer experience model within the Indonesian higher education context and provides practical implications for higher education managers in designing comprehensive and sustainable retention strategies based on student experience.

Keywords: Customer Experience, Student Retention, Academic Service Quality, Administrative Support, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Competition among universities in Indonesia, particularly in Bali, is intensifying, as the number of private higher education institutions offering various advantages in academics, facilities, and support services increases. This situation requires each university to provide a superior learning experience for students to maintain retention and continuity in their studies. Student retention indicates the extent to which an institution is able to create a satisfying experience for students in both academic and non-academic aspects (Doan, 2021). Various empirical findings support the evidence that institutional services contribute to student satisfaction and retention. A study in Vietnam found that service quality is positively related to student satisfaction and loyalty, and is strengthened by university image (Subandi & Hamid, 2021). Other research highlights satisfaction as a mediator and turnover barriers as a factor inhibiting retention, but research is still limited in the context of private universities in Bali (Nguyen & Saleem, 2026). Research in Indonesia shows that educational facilities and campus image are important in the relationship between service quality and satisfaction indicate research gaps as well as opportunities to strengthen service policies and higher education branding strategies (Supriyanto et al., 2024).

Al-Hassani and Wilkins' research found that organizational identification (organizational identification) and institutional reputation have a significant influence on student satisfaction, which then influences their intention to stay (stay intention) and supportive behavior (supportive behavior) towards institutions (Alhassani & Wilkins, 2022). Aisha and Kurnia's research found that service quality (service quality), trust, and commitment are important variables that mediate the relationship between service quality and student retention (Aisha & Kurnia, 2023), while other studies show that student satisfaction is an important mediator of the influence of service quality on student retention and loyalty (Thai & Alang, 2025). The study "Creating Experience value to build student satisfaction in higher education" show that co-creation of students in various campus activities to improve attachment And value student experience (Gunarto & Hurriyati, 2020). Minh-Tri's study found that student satisfaction mediated the relationship between service quality and student retention, while barriers to turnover mediated the relationship between student satisfaction and retention (Ha et al., 2023). Other research found that university image mediated the effect of service quality and facilities on satisfaction (Setyadi & Utari, 2023), while Li and Jackson's study found that admission pathways and student status equity group affect student experience and retention rates (Li et al., 2023).

While numerous studies have highlighted satisfaction and service quality, comprehensive studies on student experiences are still limited, particularly at private information technology-based universities in Bali. ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus faces various strategic challenges, ranging from curriculum relevance, digital facility availability, lecturer competence, to administrative and social services. Millennial and Gen Z students expect fast, transparent, technology-based educational services and interactive experiences that encompass both academic and non-academic aspects. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the integration of technology in higher education, requiring institutions to adopt online learning and effective digital communication mechanisms.

This research attempts to develop a customer experience model (customer experience model) in the context of higher education in Indonesia, emphasizing the relationship between the dimensions of academic service quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and

social interaction on student retention. The development of this model is a novelty because there are not many studies in Indonesia, especially in Bali, that combine the four dimensions of customer experience in one empirical framework based on mixed methods. This study aims to analyze the influence of academic service quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and social interaction on student retention at ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus, both partially and simultaneously. The approach used is a mixed method (mixed methods), with a survey using a questionnaire to 250 active students, which was analyzed using multiple linear regression techniques, as well as in-depth interviews with lecturers, study program managers, and students to support the quantitative findings. This study provides a theoretical contribution in expanding the application of the concept customer experience from the business world to the realm of higher education, as well as a practical contribution for university administrators in designing comprehensive and sustainable student experience-based retention strategies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As a reference in conducting the research, there are several previous research results relevant to the proposed research topic, namely on Student Retention in Higher Education: The Influences of Organizational Identification and Institutional Reputation on Student Satisfaction and Behaviors. This study analyzes the influence of organizational identification and institutional reputation on student satisfaction and their intention to persist and support the institution. The findings of this study indicate that institutional identification and reputation significantly influence satisfaction and intention to persist. The novelty of the proposed research with this research result is that there has been no testing in the context of private universities in Bali, namely, this study examines the role of reputation and institutional identity on student retention.

Another study in Vietnam by Minh-Tri entitled Understanding the Mediating Effect of Switching Costs on Service Value, Quality, Satisfaction, and Loyalty. This study analyzes the relationship between service quality, student satisfaction, switching barriers, and retention in private universities. The findings of this study indicate a positive relationship between service quality in Vietnamese higher education institutions and student satisfaction, student satisfaction has a positive relationship with student retention and switching barriers, switching barriers also show a positive relationship with student retention, and mediation analysis reveals that student satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and student retention, while switching barriers mediate the relationship between student satisfaction and retention. A relevant novelty of this research is that not many studies in Indonesia have made switching barriers an important variable; this study also integrates it with student experience.

Furthermore, the study entitled The Influence of Service Quality and Educational Facilities on Student Satisfaction is Mediated by the University Image. This study examines the impact of service quality and educational facilities on student satisfaction with university image as a mediator. The findings of this study are that service quality and facilities influence satisfaction, and university image mediates this influence. The novelty of this study is that it does not further evaluate the effect of satisfaction on loyalty and retention. The overall student experience, such as academic service quality, administrative support, social interaction, and customer optimization strategies are still little discussed.

Another study was also conducted by Li, I.W., & Jackson, D. entitled Influence of Entry Pathway and Equity Group Status on Retention and the Student Experience in Higher Education, this study analyzes how entry pathway and equity group status affect student retention and experience in higher education. The findings of this study are that admission pathways and equity group status affect student experience and retention rates; students who come from certain pathways or disadvantaged groups tend to experience differences in study experience and have a higher risk of dropping out. The novelty of this study is that it focuses more on the entry/equity aspect; there is less exploration of customer experience strategies that can be intervened by institutions to improve retention; the local context of Indonesia/Bali still has no similar research that combines entry pathway variables, student experience, and institutional strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses an approach mixed methods with design sequential explanatory design, where the quantitative method was carried out first as the dominant stage, then followed by a qualitative method to deepen the findings (Sugiyono, 2022). The research was conducted at ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus with an active student population of 250 students in the odd semester of 2025/2026 consisting of 49 students in the Digital Business Study Program, 118 students in the Information Systems Study Program, 38 students in the Computer Systems Study Program, and 45 students in the Information Technology Study Program. Data collection was carried out through questionnaires and in-depth interviews to measure student perceptions regarding customer experience variables, including academic service quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and social.

The quantitative phase focused on collecting numerical data through questionnaires distributed to active students. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression with SPSS software to measure the influence of independent variables on student retention. Prior to multiple regression testing, prerequisite tests were conducted, including testing for normality of data distribution, linearity and significance of regression direction, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation. In addition, the relative contribution and effective contribution of each predictor variable to the criterion variable were calculated. The qualitative phase was conducted through in-depth interviews with lecturers, study program managers, and students, as well as field observations. Qualitative data were analyzed using the stages of data reduction, presentation of data in the form of narratives or thematic findings, and drawing conclusions. Triangulation was conducted to validate the results and ensure consistency of findings from both approaches so that interpretations could be made comprehensively to understand customer experience optimization strategies in improving student retention.

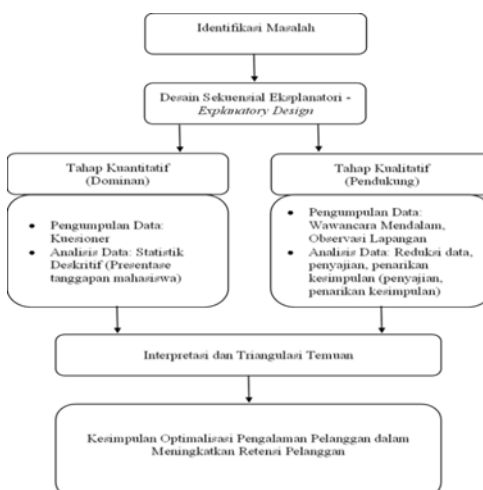


Figure 1.
Research Methodology Flowchart

Figure 1 explains the research methodology flow using an explanatory sequential design within a mixed methods approach. This design combines two research stages, quantitative and qualitative, sequentially, with the results of the first stage forming the basis for the second stage.

a. Identification of problems

The initial step in any research is to identify and formulate the research problem to be addressed. In this research context, the identified problem is how to optimize the customer experience (student experience) to increase student retention at the ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus.

b. Explanatory sequential design

This design emphasizes that the research is carried out in stages and sequentially, namely the quantitative stage is carried out first as the dominant stage, then the qualitative stage is carried out afterwards to explain or deepen the quantitative results.

c. Quantitative stage (dominant)

At this stage, the focus of the research is to collect numerical data to see the relationship between variables, namely: 1) data collection using questionnaires distributed to active students, 2) data analysis using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression to measure the influence of variables such as: quality of academic services, administrative support, campus facilities, social interaction on student retention, 3) the results of the analysis will provide a general overview of the patterns and relationships between the variables tested.

d. Qualitative (supporting) stage

This stage is carried out to deepen understanding of quantitative results by: 1) collecting data through in-depth interviews with lecturers, study program managers, and students, as well as field observations of campus activities, 2) analyzing data using qualitative analysis stages, namely data reduction (filtering important information), data presentation (organizing data in the form of thematic narratives or findings), drawing conclusions (giving meaning to qualitative data).

e. Interpretation and triangulation of findings

This stage combines the results of both approaches, namely: 1) triangulation is carried out to validate the results and ensure consistency of the findings, 2) interpretation is carried out thoroughly to understand the implications of the results for customer experience optimization strategies.

f. Conclusion

The final section is a general conclusion regarding: the most effective customer experience optimization strategies, dominant factors influencing student retention, and policy recommendations for ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus to increase student loyalty and retention.

This research was conducted at ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran campus, the population in this study were 250 active students in the odd semester of 2025/2026 consisting of 49 students of the digital business study program, 118 students of the information systems study program, 38 students of the computer systems study program, and 45 students of the information technology study program. In this study, data were collected using questionnaires and interviews to measure student perceptions regarding customer experience variables in increasing customer retention including; academic service quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and social interactions as independent variables, while customer retention as the dependent variable. The following is an overview of the conceptual framework in the study:

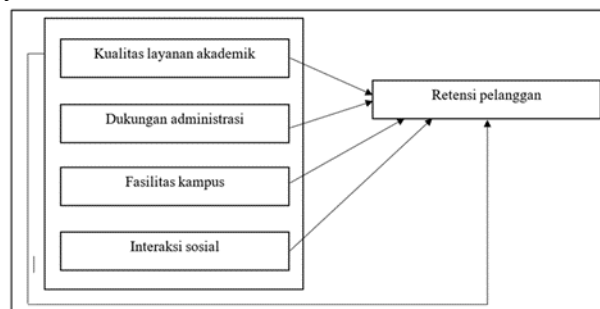


Figure 2.
Research Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 shows a conceptual framework showing the relationship between the independent variables, namely the quality of Academic Services, Administrative Support, Campus Facilities, and Social Interaction, with the dependent variable, namely Customer Retention.

This study proposes five hypotheses to be tested. The first hypothesis states that the quality of academic services has a positive and significant effect on student retention, referring to Nguyen's research et al. which shows that the quality of academic services contributes directly to student satisfaction and loyalty (Nguyen & Saleem, 2026). The second hypothesis states that administrative support has a positive and significant effect on student retention, in line with Larasari's findings et al. which confirms that fast and transparent administrative services play a vital role in improving the student experience (Larasati et al., 2025). The third hypothesis states that campus facilities have a positive and significant effect on student retention, supported by Arrizqi's research et al. which shows that physical and

digital facilities have a significant impact on student perceptions (Arrizqi et al., 2025). The fourth hypothesis states that social interaction has a positive and significant effect on student retention, based on the results of Pedler's research et al. who found that social support increases sense of belonging students (Pedler et al., 2022). The fifth hypothesis states that the quality of academic services, administrative support, campus facilities, and social interactions simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on student retention, supported by Dunggio's study, which found that the combination of customer experience elements has a cumulative effect on student retention (Dunggio, 2023).

The analysis technique used in this study is multiple regression analysis. Before conducting multiple regression testing, a prerequisite test is carried out. The prerequisite analysis test is needed to determine whether the data analysis for hypothesis testing can be continued. In this study, simple regression analysis and multiple regression analysis are used. Therefore, the prerequisite tests for regression analysis include (1) normality test of data distribution, (2) linearity test and significance of regression direction, (3) multicollinearity test, (4) heteroscedasticity test and (5) autocorrelation test. Data analysis in this study uses SPSS. In addition to conducting optimization analysis, calculations are also made on the relative contribution and effective contribution of each predictor variable to the criterion variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 250 active students of ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus in the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year from the Digital Business, Information Systems, Computer Systems, and Information Technology Study Programs. The respondents were 142 males (57%) and 108 females (43%), as presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Respondent Characteristics Based on Gender			
No	Gender	Number of Respondents (People)	Percentage
1	Man	142	57%
2	Woman	108	43%

Respondents' perceptions of the research variables showed a positive tendency, where the majority of students stated that they agreed and strongly agreed with all the variables measured (Table 3).

Table 3.

Respondent Characteristics Based on Respondent Opinions							
No	Variables	STS (1)	TS (2)	N (3)	S (4)	SS (5)	Amount
1	Quality of Service	2%	2%	28%	35%	33%	100%
2	Administrative Support	0%	4%	28%	49%	30%	100%
3	Campus Facilities	3%	5%	32%	48%	12%	100%
4	Social Interaction	1%	2%	33%	43%	21%	100%
5	Customer Retention	0%	1%	19%	42%	38%	100%

Validity test shows that all statement items have value Pearson Correlation > 0.3 and significance < 0.05, so it is declared valid (Table 4). The reliability test shows the value Cronbach's Alpha all variables > 0.60, with the highest values for Service Quality

(0.975) and Administrative Support (0.974), indicating that the research instrument is reliable (Table 5).

Table 4.
Validity Test Results

Statement Items	Pearson Correlation	Say.	Information
X1 - Item 1-5	0,794-0,842	0,000	Valid
X2 - Item 6-9	0,799-0,859	0,000	Valid
X3 - Item 10-12	0,820-0,848	0,000	Valid
X4 - Item 13-15	0,806-0,841	0,000	Valid
Y - Item 16-20	0,810-0,841	0,000	Valid

Table 5.
Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Service Quality (X ₁)	0,975	Reliable
Administrative Support (X ₂)	0,974	Reliable
Campus Facilities (X ₃)	0,861	Reliable
Social Interaction (X ₄)	0,848	Reliable
Customer Retention (Y)	0,904	Reliable

Normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov shows a significance value > 0.05 , indicating that the data is normally distributed (Figure 4). The linearity test shows that all variables have a linear relationship with a significance value > 0.05 (Table 6). The multicollinearity test shows the value tolerance > 0.1 and VIF < 10 , so there is no multicollinearity (Table 7). Heteroscedasticity test using graph scatter plot shows that there is no particular pattern, indicating that heteroscedasticity does not occur (Figure 5). Autocorrelation test with Durbin-Watson produces a value of 1.994 which is in the range $1.671 < d < 2.319$, indicating that there is no autocorrelation (Table 8).

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Unstandardized Residual
N		250
Normal Parameters ^a	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	1.93700738
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.050
	Positive	.026
	Negative	-.050
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.786
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.568

a. Test distribution is Normal.

Figure 4.
Normality Test Results with Kolmogorov-Smirnov

Table 6.
Linearity Test Results

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	F. Linearity	Say	F. Deviation	Say	Is
X ₁	AND	76,432	0,000	0,961	0,508	Linear

X ₂	AND	76,789	0,000	0,908	0,556	Linear
X ₃	AND	69,271	0,000	1,745	0,930	Linear
X ₄	AND	65,277	0,000	0,858	0,583	Linear

Table 7.
Multicollinearity Test Results

Variables	Tolerance	VIF	Information
X ₁	0,988	1,012	Free from multicollinearity
X ₂	0,463	2,158	Free from multicollinearity
X ₃	0,796	1,256	Free from multicollinearity
X ₄	0,518	1,932	Free from multicollinearity

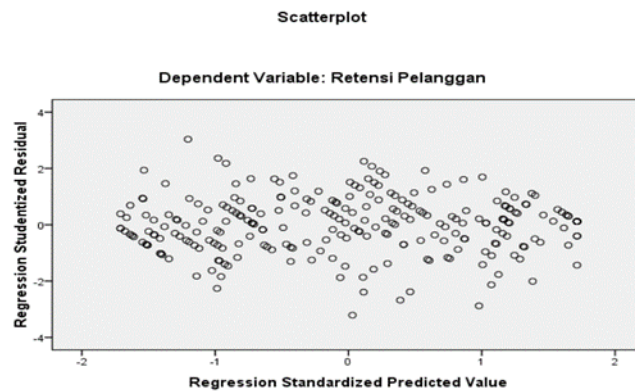


Figure 5.
Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Table 8.
Autocorrelation Test Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
1	0,860	0,739	0,735	1,470	1,994

Multiple linear regression analysis produces the equation $Y = 0.870 + 0.370X_1 + 0.458X_2 + 0.240X_3 + 0.256X_4 + e$. The results of the hypothesis test show that service quality ($t = 6.762$; $p = 0.000$), administrative support ($t = 6.636$; $p = 0.000$), campus facilities ($t = 4.146$; $p = 0.000$), and social interaction ($t = 4.336$; $p = 0.000$) have a positive and significant effect on customer retention (Table 9). The F test produces an F-count value of 530.895 with a significance of 0.000, indicating that all four variables simultaneously have a significant effect on customer retention (Table 10). The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R Square) of 0.895 shows that 89.5% of the variation in customer retention can be explained by service quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and social interactions, while the remaining 10.5% is influenced by other factors outside the research (Table 11).

Table 9.
Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Say.
(Constant)	0,870	0,805		1,081	0,281
Quality of Service	0,370	0,320	0,370	6,762	0,000
Administrative Support	0,458	0,428	0,376	6,636	0,000
Campus Facilities	0,240	0,220	0,223	4,146	0,000
Social Interaction	0,256	0,628	0,231	4,336	0,000

Table 10.
F-Test Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Say.
Regression	809,775	4	202,443	530,895	0,000
Residual	93,424	245	381		
Total	903,200	249			

Table 11.
Results of the Determination Coefficient Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0,947	0,897	0,895	1,953

The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Retention

The results of the hypothesis testing of the service quality dimensions (X1) shows a t-value of 6.762 with a significance level of 0.000. This significance level is smaller than 0.05, ($0.000 < 0.05$) which means that the hypothesis in this study rejects H0 and receive H1. These findings indicate that academic service quality has a positive and significant impact on customer retention. This suggests that the better the quality of academic service, as reflected in the consistency of the academic process, faculty competence, concern for student development, and support for academic facilities, the higher the tendency for students to persist and complete their studies at ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus. This finding aligns with the theory. service quality in higher education which states that the core quality of service (core service) is a major determinant of student satisfaction and loyalty. These results are further supported by qualitative findings, where students reported that lecturer competence and the relevance of learning materials were the primary reasons they felt comfortable and had no intention of changing campuses. Thus, the quality of academic services can be viewed as a key foundation in student retention strategies.

The Influence of Administrative Support on Customer Retention

The results of testing the administrative support hypothesis (X2) shows a t-value of 6.636 with a significance level of 0.000. This significance level is smaller than 0.05, ($0.000 < 0.05$) which means that the hypothesis in this study rejects H0 and receive H2. These findings indicate that efficient, transparent, and accessible administrative services significantly contribute to student well-being. Although administrative services are not part of the core learning process, they play a crucial role in shaping the overall student experience. Complicated and unresponsive administration has the potential to lead to dissatisfaction, which can ultimately affect students' decisions to continue their studies. In-depth interviews

revealed that an integrated academic information system helps students manage their academic activities independently. However, delays in response at certain times remain a point of improvement. These findings confirm that administrative support plays a supporting role in strengthening the influence of academic services on student retention.

The Influence of Campus Facilities on Customer Retention

The results of the hypothesis testing of the campus facilities dimension (X3) showed a t-value of 4.146 with a significance level of 0.000. This significance level is smaller than 0.05, ($0.000 < 0.05$) which means that the hypothesis in this study rejects H0 and accepts H3. ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus as an information technology-based campus, digital facilities such as computer laboratories, internet networks, and e-learning systems are crucial factors. Students in interviews stated that adequate digital facilities support practice-based learning and increase learning comfort. Theoretically, campus facilities function as supporting evidence within the service experience framework. A comfortable physical and digital environment creates a positive perception of the institution and strengthens students' emotional ties with the campus.

The Influence of Social Interaction on Customer Retention

The results of the social interaction dimension hypothesis test (X4) showed a t-value of 4.336 with a significance level of 0.000. This significance level is smaller than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), which means that the hypothesis in this study rejects H0 and accepts H4. Social interaction includes relationships between students and lecturers, administrative staff, and fellow students. The results of the study indicate that a supportive social environment creates a sense of belonging, which in turn strengthens students' commitment to completing their studies. Interview results revealed that open and communicative relationships with lecturers make students feel valued and supported. Interactions between students through organizations and group work also strengthen social ties. These findings are in line with the student engagement theory which emphasizes the importance of the social dimension in student retention.

The Simultaneous Influence of Customer Experience on Customer Retention

The results of the simultaneous test showed an F-value of 530.895 with a significance level of 0.000 ($0.000 < 0.05$). This finding indicates that the H5 hypothesis is accepted, which means that service quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and social interaction together have a positive and significant effect on student retention. The adjusted R square value of 0.895 indicates that the four variables are able to explain 89.5% of the variation in student retention, while the remaining 10.5% is influenced by other factors outside the variables studied. The interview results strengthen the quantitative findings, where students view the study experience as a whole formed by academic services, administration, facilities, and social interactions. The alignment of these four aspects creates comfort, satisfaction, and emotional attachment that encourage students to persist and complete their studies.

CONCLUSION

This study proves that customer experience plays a fundamental role in increasing student retention at ITB STIKOM Bali Jimbaran Campus. The four dimensions studied, namely academic service quality, administrative support, campus facilities, and social interaction, are proven to have a significant influence, both partially and simultaneously, with a contribution of 89.5 percent to student retention. Theoretically, this study enriches the

literature on higher education management by adapting the concept of customer experience to the context of information technology-based institutions in Indonesia. Practically, these findings provide a strategic foundation for higher education managers to develop holistic policies that integrate academic, administrative, facility, and social aspects to optimize student experience and retention. Further research is recommended to explore moderating variables and develop longitudinal studies for a more comprehensive understanding.

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