

THE MOST EFFECTIVE FORM OF COMMUNICATION IN INCREASING THE NUMBER OF NEW STUDENTS AT UT MEDAN

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the most effective source of information in increasing the number of students at Universitas Terbuka (UT) Medan. The research method used is a survey with a sample of new students from the registration period 2022.1 to 2024.2. The results of the study indicate that the most effective source of information is word of mouth from friends, followed by the UT Medan website. This study provides recommendations for UT Medan universities to increase the dissemination of information and news content on the UT Medan website in promoting study programs.

Keywords: Information sources, increasing number of students, social media, college website

1 INTRODUCTION

To increase the number of students, Universitas Terbuka (UT) Medan has made various efforts to socialize the study programs at Universitas Terbuka. Various methods in socializing UT programs are used both through print and non-print media. Through print media, flyers or brochures are distributed to the public, and banners are installed for each activity and in locations considered strategic. While for non-print media, through digital mass media/social media (Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram), the UT website, and as an additional source of information about UT Medan, can come from family or relatives of prospective students.

Program socialization is the process of introducing and promoting a program to the public, stakeholders, or target audience. The goal of program socialization is to increase public awareness, understanding, and participation in the program. Several studies on the use of print and non-print media on the interest of new students conducted by Hendra in the Caraka Journal: Indonesia Journal of Communication (2022; 56-61) concluded that the use of print and non-print media has a positive impact on attracting students' interest in joining the University of Pembangunan Jaya. The same results are also explained in research conducted by Lashwaty et al in the STIE Semarang Journal (2020; 72-82), which states that the use of websites, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook simultaneously influences the acceptance of new students at STMIK Amikom Surakarta.

Based on the background described above, the problems in this research are as follows:

1. What is the profile of new students at UT Medan from even 2023 to 2024 (4 semesters)?
2. How is the distribution of new students in each district/city in North Sumatra?
3. How do students obtain information?
4. What is the most effective communication media in disseminating information to prospective students?

2 METHODOLOGY

This research is explanatory research, namely research that aims to explain the influence between variables or causal relationships between the variables studied, and aims to find out the sources of information that have the most influence on the number of new students at UT Medan. The subjects in this study were all new students who had answered information sources about UT Medan through both print and non-print media from the registration period of odd-numbered 2022 to even-numbered 2024. The sampling technique used in this study was systematic sampling, which was chosen because of the large sample size and its homogeneity. In this study, the population was divided based on the registration period, and then students who completed the information source questions were selected. The instrument in this study is based on answers from prospective UT Medan students regarding the origin of information sources disseminated by UT Medan, both through print and non-print media.

The data obtained will be analyzed descriptively, taking into account the response trends for each variable. Data will be presented as frequencies and percentages. Researchers will discuss comparisons of the analysis results between cohorts.

To analyze the influence of communication media (1) *word of mouth* (from mouth to mouth) through relatives or siblings, (2) print media (newspapers, magazines, leaflets), (3) digital media (Instagram, WhatsApp), (4) *word of mouth* (from mouth to mouth) through colleagues and (5) from the UT website on the increase in the number of new students at UT Medan, a multiple linear regression model was used (Gujarati, 1999):

$$Y=b_0+b_1X_1+b_2X_2+b_3X_3+ b_4 X_4 + E$$

To determine the meaning of the F-test value, the significance level (sig.F) will be compared with the significance level ($\alpha = 5\%$). If sig. F ≤ 0.05 or if the calculated F $>$ F table, then the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the *independent variables* together have a significant effect on the *dependent variable*. The significance of the variables that influence the decision to study at the Open University is partially (individually), and a t-test is used. To determine the meaning of the t-test value, it will be done by comparing the significance level (sig.t) with the significance level (α

= 5%). If sig. $T \leq 0.05$ or if the calculated $t > F$ table, then the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the *independent variable* partially has a significant effect on the *dependent variable*.

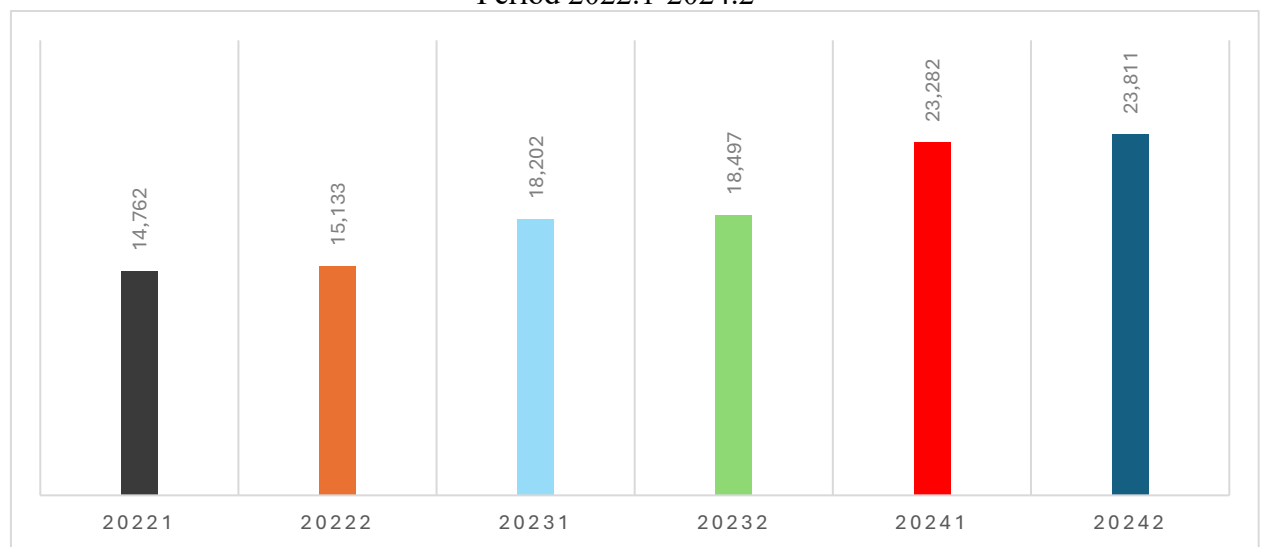
3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 New students

3.1.1 Total Number of UT Medan Students

The total number of students registered at UT Medan during the last 6 semesters, starting from the 2022.1 to 2024.2 registration period, is as follows:

Table 4.1. Total Number of UT Medan Students
Period 2022.1-2024.2



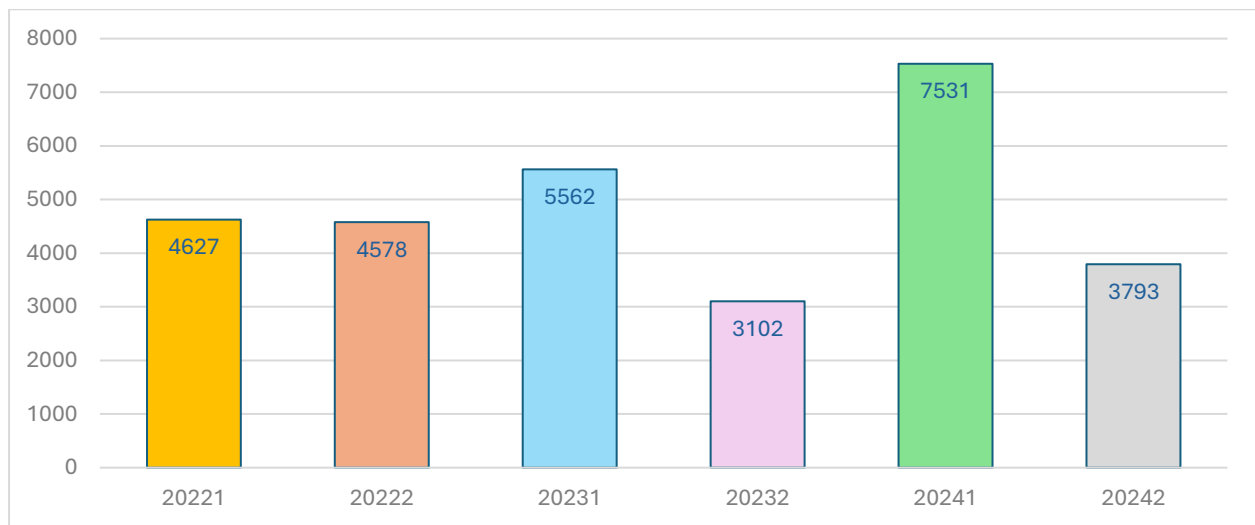
Source: www.registrasi.ut.ac.id

From the table above, it can be seen that every semester there is an increase in the number of new students from undergraduate and postgraduate programs. If we calculate the average increase in new students is 11%.

3.1.2 Number of New Students

New students are prospective students who have completed their registration form and paid their tuition fees. Data on the number of new students from the 2022.1 to 2024.2 registration period is shown in the table below:

Table 4.2. Number of New Students at UT Medan
Registration Period 2022.1 – 2024.2



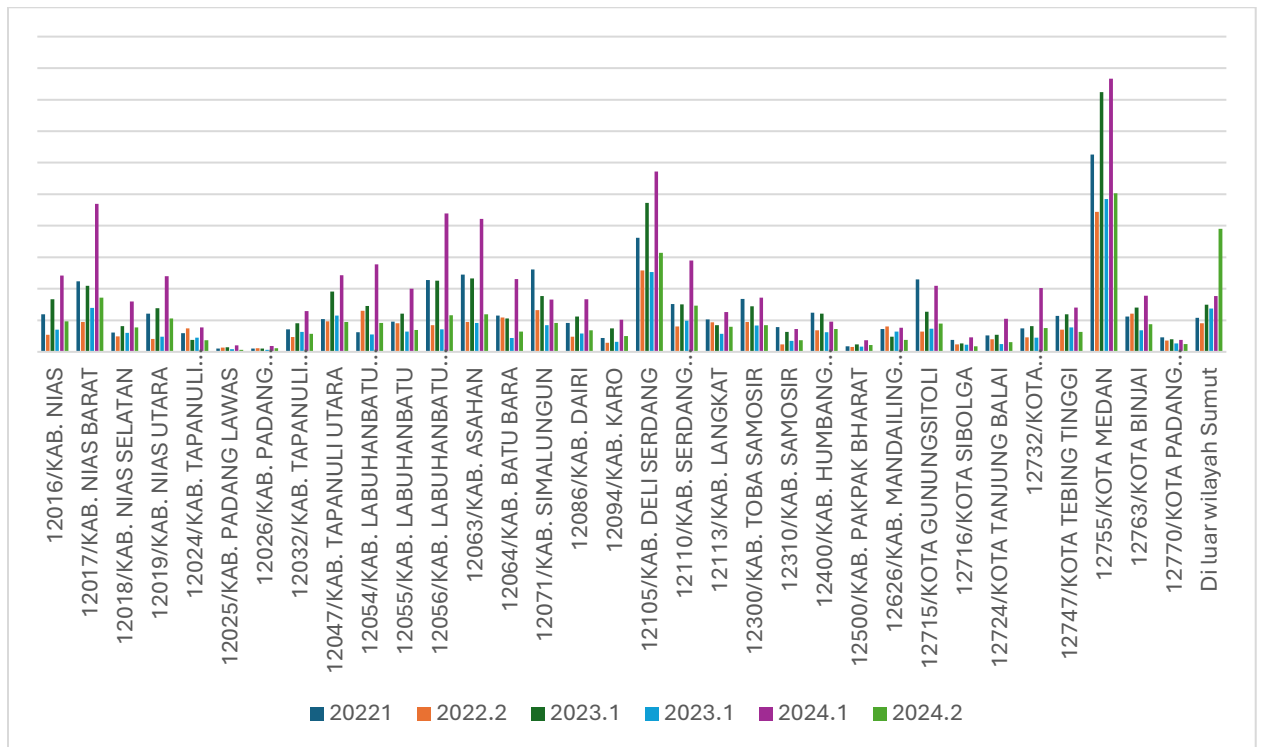
Source: www.registrasi.ut.ac.id

The number of new students registered at UT Medan was highest during the 2024.1 registration period, while in the 2024.2 period, there was a decrease of almost 50%. The number of new students has fluctuated over the past six semesters, but the largest decrease occurred during the 2024.2 registration period. A decrease in the number of new students also occurred in the 2023.1 period, but this decrease was not as large as 44%. Conversely, the highest increase in the number of students occurred during the 2024.1 registration period, which saw a 144% increase compared to the previous period.

3.1.3 Number of New Students per District

UT Medan students are spread across 33 districts/cities in the North Sumatra region. The number of new students per district/city in the North Sumatra region and also from outside the North Sumatra region, including students from abroad (Penang and Kuala Lumpur) from the registration period 2022.1 to 2024.2, is shown in the table below:

Table 4.3. Data on the Number of New Students per District
Registration Period 2022.1 – 2024.2



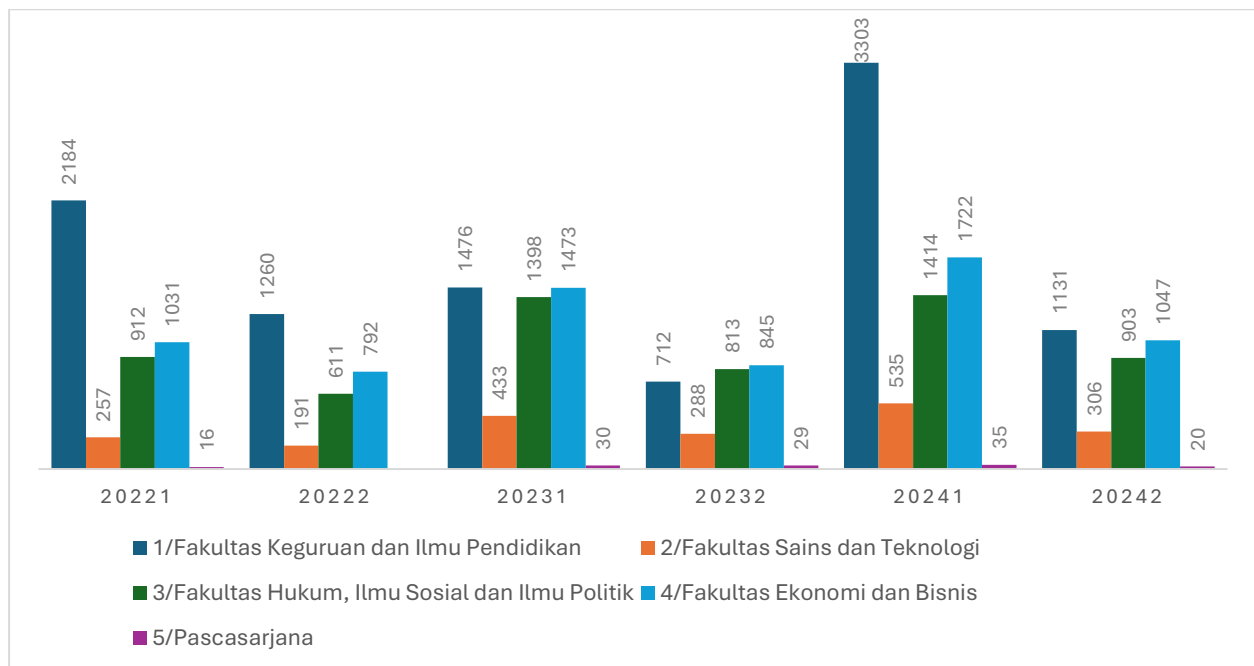
Source: www.registrasi.ut.ac.id

From the data above, the average increase over 6 semesters in the number of new students in each district/city in terms of percentage experienced an increase, and the largest increase on average was in the North Labuhan Batu district at 96%. For students outside the North Sumatra region (including students from abroad), there was also an average increase of 38%.

3.1.4 Number of New Students per Faculty

The number of new students per faculty and postgraduate program has increased, although not all faculties have increased significantly, as seen in the following table:

Table 4.4. Data on the Number of New Students per Faculty at UT Medan
Registration Period 2022.1 -2024.2



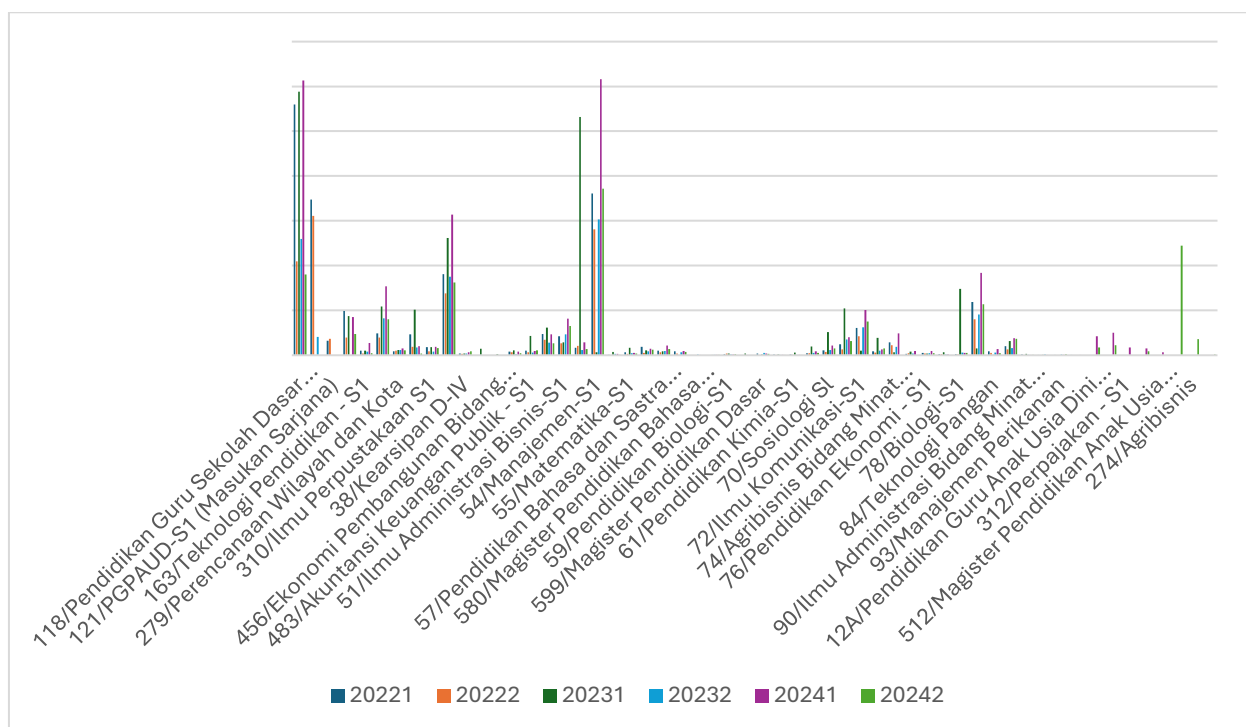
Source: www.resgitrasi.ut.ac.id

If you look at the chart above, the number of new students for the past six semesters, FKIP still holds the highest number of new students admitted, but this is fluctuating. Non-education faculties also experienced fluctuations in the number of new students accepted by faculty, with an average increase of 130% during the 2024.1 registration period.

3.1.5 Number of New Students per Study Program

UT has opened several new study programs during the 2024.1 registration period, including Islamic religious education and long-standing programs. However, there are changes to the registration requirements, allowing FKIP students without teaching experience to enroll. This has certainly had a positive impact on increasing the number of students. The table below shows the number of students per study program from the 2022.1 to 2024.2 registration period.

Table 4.5. Number of New Students per Study Program at UT Medan
Registration Period 2022.1 – 2024.2



Source: www.registasi.ut.ac.id

From the data above, the PGSD study program is no longer the one with the largest number of new students; the management study program is the study program with the largest number of new students, namely with an average increase of 59%.

3.2 Information Sources Regarding UT Medan

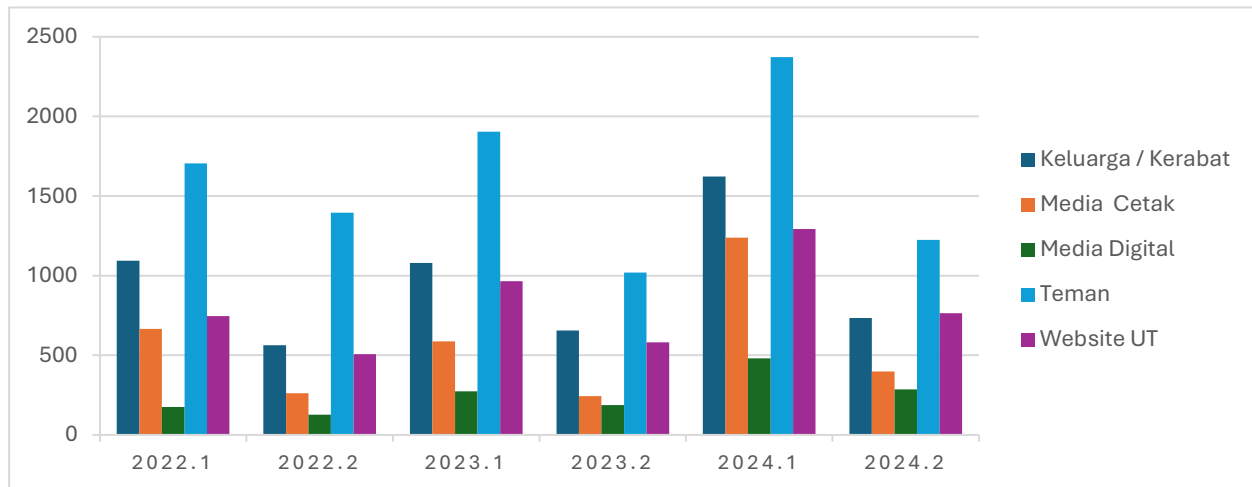
3.2.1 Forms of Communication Received by Prospective Students

In its efforts to increase the number of students, UT Medan has made various communication efforts to prospective students regarding educational programs at UT. In disseminating information, this is done by:

- Print media (newspapers, banners, and leaflets)
- Digital media (Instagram, podcast programs, WhatsApp messages)
- *Word of mouth* through relatives or friends of prospective students

Based on the recorded data of those who obtained information about UT and the form of communication, as shown in the following table:

Table 4.6. Forms of Communication Obtained by Prospective Students
Registration Period 2022.1 -2024.2



Source: www.ragistrasi.ut.ac.id

From the data above, it can be seen that the highest form of communication is *word of mouth* (from mouth to mouth), either through relatives or friends of prospective students; meanwhile, the use of digital media and social media shows that communication media are increasingly being accessed by prospective students.

3.2.2 Partial Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using a multiple linear regression model on available data for the dependent variable, namely the number of new students at UT Medan, and the independent variables, namely information from relatives, print media, digital media, friends, and the UT website. Using this model to test the influence of the three independent variables on the dependent variable, partially, resulted in the following results:

Table 4.7. Partial Hypothesis Testing
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	164,876	236,059		.698	.498
	Relatives	2,205	1,500	.566	1,470	.167
	print media	1,604	1,455	.384	1.103	.292
	digital media	-7,009	2,523	-.580	-2,778	.017
	Friend	-1,850	.427	-.889	-4,331	.001
	web ut	7,120	1,843	1,328	3,863	.002

a. Dependent Variable: number of new students

Partially, the variables of friends and the UT website have p-values below 0.05 (<0.05), indicating that friends and the UT website have a significant influence on the increase in the number of new students at UT Medan. The variables of relatives, print media, and digital media have values above 0.05 (>0.05), which means that relatives, print media, and digital media do not have an effect on the increase in the number of new students at UT Medan.

3.2.3 Simultaneous Testing

To determine the level of significance of the five variables in increasing the number of new students at UT Medan, simultaneously, testing was carried out on the simultaneous regression equation using the F-test, with results as in the table below :

Table 4.7. *Simultaneous Testing*
ANOVA ^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3808992.009	5	761798.402	45,814	.000 ^b
	Residual	199538.491	12	16628.208		
	Total	4008530.500	17			

a. Dependent Variable: number of new students

Based on the regression analysis conducted, a significant value of $0.000 < 0.05$ was shown. Thus, it can be concluded that all five variables simultaneously have a significant effect on the increase in the number of new students at UT Medan.

3.2.4 Coefficient of Determination

To determine the extent of the influence of these variables on the decision to study at UT, a determination test must be carried out with the results shown in the following table.

Table 4.8. Determination Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.575 ^a	.425	.506	128.9504

The equation also explains that the four variables can explain the influence on the decision to study at UT by 42.5% and 57.5% of the increase in the number of new students at UT Medan is influenced by other factors.

4 CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion explained, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. In its efforts to increase the number of students, UT Medan utilizes various forms of sources, including print media (magazines, newspapers, banners, leaflets, etc.), digital social media (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube), WOM from relatives and friends, and the UT website.
2. Based on the results of statistical testing, information from friends and the UT website has a significant influence on increasing the number of new students at UT Medan.
3. Information from relatives, print media, and digital media did not have a significant influence on increasing the number of students at UT Medan.
4. Information from relatives, print media, digital media, friends, and the UT website simultaneously influences the increase in new students at UT Medan.

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