



Analyzing the Effectiveness of the Turba (Turun Bareng) Strategy for Student Recruitment in the Era of Social Media Exclusivity

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy in recruiting prospective students in the era of social media exclusivity at MA Raudlatul Jinan. The research employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving the principal, public relations officers, admission committee members, teachers, parents, prospective students, and community leaders. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings reveal three major aspects of the Turba strategy's effectiveness. First, Turba successfully builds trust among prospective students and parents through direct interpersonal communication. Second, Turba serves as an effective personal communication approach that reaches communities beyond the limitations of social media, particularly those with varying levels of digital access and literacy. Third, Turba significantly contributes to increasing new student enrollment by transforming public trust into actual enrollment decisions. The study concludes that despite the widespread use of digital marketing in educational institutions, interpersonal communication remains a fundamental component of effective student recruitment. Integrating face-to-face engagement with digital promotion enables educational institutions to establish stronger public trust, broaden community outreach, and enhance enrollment outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed the communication and marketing strategies of educational institutions. The emergence of social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube has enabled schools and madrasahs to disseminate information more efficiently while reaching wider audiences (Irhamdhika, El Hidayah, Ariska, Ningtyas, & Sari, 2025). Consequently, educational institutions increasingly rely on digital content to strengthen institutional visibility and attract prospective

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students. However, the growing dependence on social media has also generated a phenomenon referred to as social media exclusivity, in which promotional activities predominantly reach digitally active communities while overlooking segments of society with limited digital access or lower engagement with online platforms. This condition suggests that student recruitment strategies cannot solely depend on digital promotion but should also consider the diverse social characteristics of prospective stakeholders (Purnomo, 2022).

The limitation of digital-based promotion becomes more apparent in communities where interpersonal relationships remain the primary basis for decision-making. In many rural and semi-urban areas, parents often rely on recommendations from religious leaders, alumni, community figures, and personal interactions rather than solely on information obtained through social media (Haromain, 2023). As a result, direct communication continues to play a strategic role in fostering trust and strengthening emotional relationships between educational institutions and the community. This phenomenon indicates that conventional interpersonal approaches remain relevant despite the rapid digitalization of educational marketing, particularly in regions where social and cultural values strongly influence educational choices (Sazali & Sukriah, 2021).

MA Raudlatul Jinan Probolinggo represents one of the Islamic senior high schools that implements the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy as its primary student recruitment program. This strategy involves direct visits by the recruitment team to junior high schools, Islamic boarding schools, local communities, alumni networks, and parents of prospective students to introduce the institution's educational programs through face-to-face communication. Although the madrasah actively utilizes social media to disseminate institutional information, Turba remains the principal recruitment approach because it is perceived to be more effective in establishing public trust and providing comprehensive information regarding the school's educational values and academic excellence. This phenomenon demonstrates that interpersonal communication continues to complement digital promotion in enhancing student enrolment (Lando, 2025).

Previous studies have predominantly examined educational marketing from the perspectives of digital marketing, social media utilization, school branding, and online promotional strategies (Erlin et al., 2024). Existing literature generally concludes that the effectiveness of student recruitment is closely associated with the quality of digital content, institutional branding, and the intensity of online communication. Meanwhile, studies discussing interpersonal communication mainly focus on school–community relationships within the context of public relations and stakeholder engagement. However, empirical research specifically investigating the effectiveness of the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy as a face-to-face recruitment approach amid the exclusivity of social media remains limited (Erlin et al., 2024).

This condition reveals a significant theoretical gap within the educational marketing literature. Contemporary educational marketing theories tend to emphasize digital communication as the dominant promotional approach, whereas relationship marketing theory highlights interpersonal interaction, trust, and long-term relationships as the foundations of effective organizational communication (Ariani & Reflianto, 2024). To date, limited attention has been given to how direct interpersonal recruitment strategies remain effective in educational institutions

despite the widespread adoption of digital marketing. Consequently, further investigation is required to explain the relevance and effectiveness of the Turba strategy in addressing the limitations of social media-based recruitment within the context of Islamic educational institutions (Qomar & Restu Damara, 2023).

Based on these considerations, this study offers a novel perspective by positioning the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy as an interpersonal relationship marketing model for student recruitment in the era of social media exclusivity. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on digital promotion, this research examines how direct interaction contributes to building trust, emotional attachment, and enrollment decisions among prospective students and their parents. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy in recruiting prospective students in the era of social media exclusivity at MA Raudlatul Jinan, thereby contributing to the development of educational marketing strategies that integrate interpersonal communication with contemporary digital promotion.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine the effectiveness of the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy in recruiting prospective students in the era of social media exclusivity (Aji, Suherman, Kurniawan, & Achmad, 2023). The research was conducted at MA Raudlatul Jinan, which was selected because the institution consistently implements direct recruitment activities alongside digital promotional strategies. The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of how the Turba strategy was planned, implemented, received by the community, and evaluated in relation to student enrollment (Afnita & Wandu, 2022).

Research informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in the Turba program and their knowledge of the student recruitment process. The informants included the head of the madrasah, public relations staff, members of the student admission committee, teachers involved in Turba activities, alumni, parents, and newly enrolled students (Tambunan & Pandiangan, 2024). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored the implementation, strengths, limitations, and perceived effectiveness of the Turba strategy, while observations focused on direct recruitment activities and interactions between the madrasah team and prospective stakeholders. Documentation included recruitment schedules, promotional materials, enrollment records, social media publications, and institutional reports (Efendi, Raefaldhi, & Al Farisi, 2023).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The effectiveness of the Turba strategy was assessed through several indicators, including the reach of direct recruitment activities, community responses, the level of trust generated through face-to-face communication, and the contribution of Turba to prospective students' enrollment decisions. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking by comparing information from different informants and validating the interpretation of findings with selected participants (Shahzad, Xu, Naveed, Nusrat, & Zahid, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Effectiveness of the Turba Strategy in Building Trust among Prospective Students and Parents

The findings reveal that the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy serves as a fundamental mechanism for establishing trust between MA Raudlatul Jinan and prospective students as well as their parents. Unlike social media promotion, which primarily delivers one-way information, Turba facilitates direct interpersonal communication through school visits, face-to-face discussions, and interactive question-and-answer sessions. These interactions allow prospective students and parents to obtain comprehensive information regarding the madrasah's academic programs, religious values, extracurricular activities, and educational environment. More importantly, direct engagement provides opportunities to clarify misconceptions and reduce uncertainty, thereby strengthening confidence in the institution. The data indicate that trust emerges not merely from the information provided but from the quality of interpersonal relationships established during the Turba activities.

Another significant finding demonstrates that parents perceive Turba as a more credible communication approach than digital promotion. Several informants explained that although they had previously encountered promotional content through social media, their decision to enroll their children was made only after meeting the Turba team directly. Face-to-face interaction enabled parents to assess the commitment, sincerity, and competence of the recruitment team while receiving immediate responses to their concerns regarding educational quality, tuition fees, boarding facilities, and student development. Consequently, trust was constructed through personal interaction rather than digital exposure alone, positioning Turba as a relationship-oriented recruitment strategy capable of influencing educational decision-making.

Table 1. Evidence of Findings on the Effectiveness of the Turba Strategy in Building Trust

Informant	Research Findings
Principal	Turba enables the institution to communicate directly with prospective students and parents, creating stronger trust than online promotion.
Public Relations Officer	Most parents actively asked questions during Turba visits, indicating a higher level of engagement and confidence in face-to-face communication.
Turba Team Member	Direct interaction allowed the recruitment team to explain the madrasah's vision, curriculum, and boarding system comprehensively.
Parent	The decision to enroll their child was influenced more by the direct explanation provided during Turba than by information available on social media.
Newly Enrolled Student	Personal visits from the Turba team increased confidence in choosing MA Raudlatul Jinan because the information was clear and convincing.
Community Leader	Turba strengthened public trust because the institution demonstrated sincerity by directly engaging with the community rather than relying solely on digital promotion.

Source: Researcher's Interview Results (2025).

The findings indicate that trust represents the primary outcome of the Turba strategy rather than merely increasing institutional visibility. This suggests that the effectiveness of educational marketing should not be measured exclusively by the reach of promotional media but also by its ability to establish meaningful interpersonal relationships. In educational contexts, trust functions as a decisive factor influencing parental decision-making because education involves long-term investment and emotional commitment. Therefore, prospective parents require assurance regarding institutional credibility before making enrollment decisions.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the principles of Relationship Marketing Theory, which emphasizes that sustainable organizational success is achieved through the development of long-term relationships rather than transactional communication. Turba embodies this principle by replacing impersonal promotional messages with direct interaction characterized by dialogue, empathy, and mutual understanding. Consequently, the recruitment process becomes relationship-centered rather than promotion-centered, enabling stronger emotional attachment between the institution and prospective stakeholders (Ariani & Reflianto, 2024).

The findings also align with Morgan and Hunt's Commitment–Trust Theory, which identifies trust as the cornerstone of enduring organizational relationships. During Turba activities, trust is developed through transparent communication, responsiveness to parental concerns, and the consistency of information delivered by the recruitment team. This interpersonal communication reduces perceived risk, a factor commonly associated with educational decision-making, particularly when parents seek institutions capable of providing both academic excellence and moral development (Babys & Pramana, 2025).

Furthermore, these findings demonstrate that social media alone cannot entirely replace interpersonal communication within educational marketing. While digital platforms effectively disseminate institutional information, they often lack opportunities for immediate clarification, emotional engagement, and personalized interaction. Turba addresses these limitations by facilitating reciprocal communication that enables prospective students and parents to participate actively in the information exchange process. This interactive communication significantly enhances perceived institutional credibility.

Another important implication is that trust should be regarded as the central indicator of recruitment effectiveness rather than enrollment numbers alone. Increased student enrollment is ultimately the consequence of trust that has already been established through effective communication. Therefore, educational institutions should consider interpersonal engagement as a strategic investment in institutional reputation rather than merely an operational recruitment activity (Sulaiman Djaya, 2024).

Overall, the study concludes that the effectiveness of the Turba strategy lies in its capacity to transform institutional promotion into relationship building. Through direct communication, emotional interaction, and reciprocal engagement, Turba successfully generates public trust, which subsequently strengthens institutional reputation and influences enrollment decisions. These findings suggest that in the era of social media exclusivity, interpersonal communication remains an indispensable component of educational marketing,

particularly for Islamic educational institutions operating within community-oriented social environments (Aini & Ade, 2025).

The Effectiveness of the Turba Strategy as a Personal Approach amid Social Media Exclusivity

The findings show that the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy functions as an effective personal approach for reaching prospective students and parents who are not fully connected to the madrasah's digital communication channels. Although MA Raudlatul Jinan uses social media to disseminate information, not all target communities actively follow institutional accounts or regularly access educational content online. Some parents depend more heavily on direct explanations, recommendations from trusted individuals, and face-to-face communication when making educational decisions. Turba therefore expands the institution's recruitment reach by bringing information directly to communities that may remain outside the effective coverage of social media promotion.

The implementation of Turba also allows the madrasah to adjust its communication to the social and cultural characteristics of each target community. Recruitment team members can explain educational programs in language that is easier to understand, respond to specific concerns, and adapt their presentation to the expectations of prospective students, parents, school principals, alumni, and community leaders. This personalized communication creates a sense of recognition and inclusion that is difficult to achieve through standardized digital content. As a result, Turba does not merely distribute information but also reduces the communication gap between the madrasah and communities with different levels of digital access and literacy.

Table 2. Evidence of Findings on Turba as a Personal Approach amid Social Media Exclusivity

Informant	Research Findings
Principal	Social media promotion does not reach all prospective families, particularly those who are less active on digital platforms.
Public Relations Officer	Turba enables the madrasah to deliver information directly to communities that rarely interact with institutional social media content.
Turba Team Member	Face-to-face visits make it possible to adapt the explanation to the needs and characteristics of each school or community.
Parent	Direct communication was easier to understand and more convincing than information presented through social media posts.
Prospective Student	The Turba visit provided detailed information that had not been obtained from the madrasah's online content.
Community Leader	The personal presence of the madrasah team demonstrated respect for the community and encouraged greater openness toward the institution.

Source: Researcher's Interview Results (2025).

The findings indicate that social media exclusivity is not limited to unequal internet access. It also concerns differences in digital literacy, platform preferences, algorithmic exposure, and the ability of audiences to interpret institutional messages. A social media account may technically be accessible to the public, yet its content does not automatically reach or influence all intended audiences. Turba overcomes this limitation by replacing algorithm-dependent communication with direct social presence, ensuring that institutional information

reaches people who may otherwise remain invisible within digital recruitment metrics.

This finding challenges the assumption that digital communication is inherently more inclusive than conventional interaction. In practice, digital promotion may produce a new form of exclusion because only digitally connected and algorithmically exposed audiences receive repeated institutional messages. Communities with limited platform engagement can therefore be marginalized from the recruitment process. Turba offers a corrective mechanism by restoring direct access to information and treating communication as a social encounter rather than merely content distribution.

From the perspective of the digital divide, the effectiveness of Turba lies in its capacity to address not only the first-level divide of technological access but also the second-level divide of skills and usage. Even when families possess smartphones and internet connections, they may not use social media for educational decision-making or may be unable to distinguish substantive institutional information from promotional content. Through personal explanation, Turba transforms complex information into accessible knowledge and allows audiences to verify it immediately through dialogue (Rizki, Kurniawati, & Nugroho, 2022).

The findings also support the logic of two-way symmetrical communication, in which effective public relations is built through reciprocal exchange rather than one-directional persuasion. Social media promotion often remains institution-centered because the madrasah controls the message, format, and timing. Turba creates a more balanced communicative space where prospective stakeholders can question, challenge, compare, and negotiate the information they receive. This reciprocal process strengthens understanding and reduces the distance between the institution and its public.

A deeper interpretation suggests that the power of Turba does not come from its conventional format but from its relational flexibility. The recruitment team can read local responses, identify hesitation, and immediately reformulate its message. Such adaptability is difficult to replicate through static digital posts. Therefore, the personal approach provides contextual intelligence that enables the institution to understand not only who receives the message but also how the message is interpreted (Ariani & Reflianto, 2024).

The strategic implication is that MA Raudlatul Jinan should not position Turba and social media as competing methods. Both should be integrated within a hybrid recruitment model. Social media can create initial awareness and provide continuous information, while Turba can deepen understanding, reach excluded groups, and convert distant audiences into relational stakeholders. In this model, digital communication expands reach, whereas interpersonal communication builds inclusion and meaning (Sholichah & Mardikaningsing, 2024)promosi.

Overall, Turba is effective amid social media exclusivity because it restores human presence within an increasingly mediated recruitment environment. It reaches communities beyond algorithmic visibility, accommodates differences in digital literacy, and creates communication that is contextual, reciprocal, and socially inclusive. The finding confirms that the digitalization of educational marketing should not eliminate face-to-face engagement; rather, direct communication remains essential for ensuring that institutional outreach does not

exclude the very communities the madrasah intends to serve.

The Effectiveness of the Turba Strategy in Increasing New Student Enrollment

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy has made a significant contribution to increasing the number of new student enrollments at MA Raudlatul Jinan. Based on interviews with the admission committee, school management, and newly enrolled students, Turba has become one of the institution's most effective recruitment strategies because it successfully transforms public interest into actual enrollment decisions. Unlike digital promotion, which mainly increases institutional visibility, Turba creates direct engagement that enables prospective students and parents to obtain detailed information before making educational decisions. Consequently, the recruitment process is characterized not merely by increased public awareness but also by a higher conversion rate from prospective applicants to officially enrolled students.

Another important finding demonstrates that the effectiveness of Turba is reflected not only in the growth of enrollment numbers but also in the quality of student recruitment. Several informants explained that students recruited through Turba generally possessed a clearer understanding of the madrasah's educational vision, learning system, and boarding culture before registration. This prior understanding reduced uncertainty during the admission process and strengthened students' commitment to continue their education at MA Raudlatul Jinan. The findings therefore suggest that Turba contributes simultaneously to both quantitative outcomes, represented by increased enrollment, and qualitative outcomes, represented by stronger institutional commitment among newly admitted students.

Table 3. Evidence of Findings on the Effectiveness of the Turba Strategy in Increasing Student Enrollment

Informant	Research Findings
Principal	Student enrollment has shown a positive increase following the consistent implementation of the Turba strategy.
Admission Committee	A considerable proportion of newly enrolled students reported that Turba was the primary source of information influencing their enrollment decisions.
Public Relations Officer	Direct school visits generated more serious prospective applicants compared with responses obtained solely through social media promotion.
Newly Enrolled Student	Personal interaction during Turba strengthened confidence in choosing MA Raudlatul Jinan.
Parent	The decision to enroll their child was finalized after receiving direct explanations from the Turba team.
Alumni	Recommendations delivered during Turba activities encouraged prospective students to consider MA Raudlatul Jinan as their preferred educational institution.

Source: Researcher's Interview Results (2025).

The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of Turba should not be interpreted solely through the number of promotional activities conducted but rather through its ability to influence educational decision-making. Student recruitment is fundamentally a decision-making process involving uncertainty, perceived risk, and long-term parental expectations. Within this context, Turba

functions as a mechanism for reducing informational uncertainty by providing comprehensive explanations and direct interaction between the institution and prospective stakeholders. Consequently, enrollment becomes the result of informed trust rather than spontaneous promotional influence (Rahmawati, Puspitasari, & Setiawan, 2024).

From a broader perspective, the findings suggest that recruitment effectiveness extends beyond institutional exposure to encompass behavioral conversion, namely the successful transformation of public interest into actual enrollment. Digital promotion is capable of generating awareness, yet awareness alone does not necessarily lead to registration. Turba bridges this gap by providing opportunities for dialogue, clarification, and personalized communication, enabling prospective students and parents to make educational choices with greater confidence (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

These findings further indicate that interpersonal recruitment possesses a persuasive advantage over exclusively digital promotion because it combines informational, emotional, and relational dimensions within a single communication process. During Turba, prospective families not only receive factual information but also experience institutional values through direct interaction with the recruitment team. This interaction strengthens institutional credibility and creates emotional attachment that cannot easily be replicated through digital media alone.

The results also imply that recruitment success should be evaluated using a multidimensional perspective. An effective strategy is not simply one that reaches large audiences but one that successfully influences attitudes, builds trust, facilitates understanding, and ultimately encourages enrollment decisions. In this regard, Turba demonstrates characteristics of a high-impact recruitment strategy because it integrates communication, relationship building, and institutional representation within one continuous process (Karin et al., 2021).

An important implication of this study is that educational institutions should reconsider the assumption that digital marketing alone is sufficient to achieve enrollment targets. Instead, recruitment strategies should integrate interpersonal engagement with digital communication to maximize both institutional reach and conversion effectiveness. Digital platforms may attract attention, whereas direct interaction remains essential for transforming that attention into commitment.

The findings confirm that the Turba strategy contributes substantially to increasing student enrollment by facilitating informed educational decisions, strengthening institutional trust, and improving the quality of recruitment outcomes. In the context of social media exclusivity, the success of Turba illustrates that educational marketing remains fundamentally a human-centered process in which personal interaction continues to play a decisive role in influencing institutional choice (Erilin et al., 2024).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy plays a pivotal role in transforming educational marketing into a relational and trust-oriented process. Unlike conventional digital promotion, which primarily emphasizes information dissemination, Turba facilitates direct interpersonal engagement that allows prospective students and parents to

experience the institution more authentically. This shift from informational communication to relational interaction highlights that trust is not merely constructed through message exposure but through meaningful human connection. Consequently, the effectiveness of Turba lies in its ability to position communication as a dialogical and socially embedded process.

From the perspective of Relationship Marketing Theory, the findings reinforce the notion that sustainable organizational success is rooted in long-term relationship building rather than transactional promotion. Turba embodies this principle by prioritizing face-to-face interaction, empathy, and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. The direct engagement between the recruitment team and prospective families enables the development of emotional bonds that strengthen institutional attachment. This suggests that educational institutions, particularly those operating in community-based environments, should emphasize relational strategies to ensure long-term trust and loyalty.

Furthermore, the findings align with the Commitment–Trust Theory proposed by Morgan and Hunt, which posits that trust is the central determinant of successful relational exchanges. In the context of Turba, trust emerges through transparent communication, immediate feedback, and consistent messaging delivered by the recruitment team. This process reduces perceived risks commonly associated with educational decision-making, especially when parents must evaluate both academic quality and moral development. Therefore, Turba serves not only as a communication tool but also as a mechanism for risk reduction and confidence building.

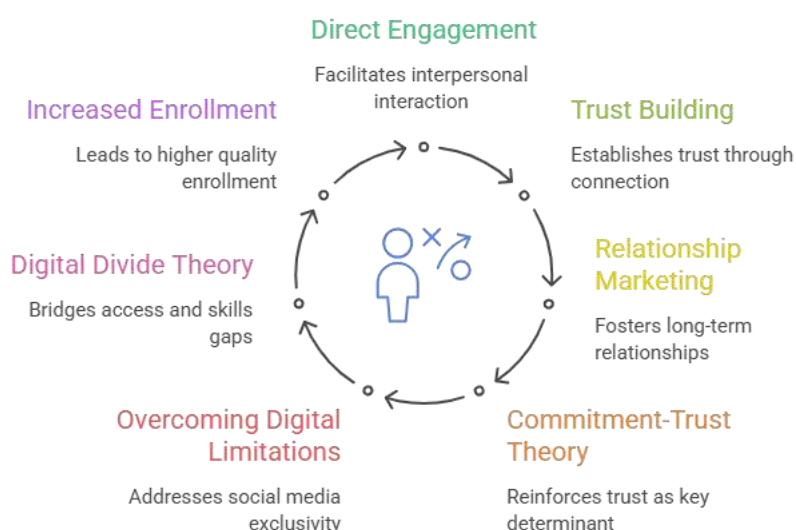
Another important dimension revealed in this study is the limitation of social media as a standalone recruitment strategy. While digital platforms are effective in expanding institutional visibility, they often fail to provide the depth of interaction required to influence decision-making. The absence of real-time clarification and emotional engagement reduces the persuasive power of digital communication. Turba addresses this gap by enabling reciprocal communication, where prospective stakeholders can actively participate, ask questions, and negotiate meanings, thereby enhancing institutional credibility.

The study also highlights the issue of social media exclusivity, which extends beyond unequal access to technology. Differences in digital literacy, algorithmic exposure, and audience engagement patterns create a form of invisible exclusion within digital promotion. Turba effectively overcomes this limitation by ensuring that institutional communication reaches diverse communities, including those less connected to digital platforms. This finding challenges the assumption that digital communication is inherently inclusive and emphasizes the continued relevance of direct social interaction.

In relation to the digital divide theory, Turba addresses both the first-level divide (access to technology) and the second-level divide (skills and usage). Even when prospective families have access to digital tools, they may lack the ability or preference to utilize them for educational decision-making. Through personalized explanation and contextual communication, Turba transforms complex institutional information into accessible knowledge. This demonstrates that effective communication requires not only technological reach but also cognitive and cultural accessibility.

The findings further reveal that the effectiveness of Turba is evident in its ability to increase both the quantity and quality of student enrollment. Unlike digital promotion, which often generates passive interest, Turba produces active engagement that leads to informed decision-making. Students recruited through this strategy tend to have a clearer understanding of institutional values and expectations, resulting in stronger commitment and reduced uncertainty. This indicates that recruitment success should be evaluated not only by numerical growth but also by the depth of stakeholder understanding and institutional alignment.

Overall, this study confirms that the Turba strategy represents a human-centered approach to educational marketing that remains highly relevant in the digital era. Rather than replacing interpersonal communication, digital platforms should be integrated with relational strategies to create a hybrid recruitment model. In this model, social media functions to expand reach, while Turba strengthens trust, inclusion, and conversion. Therefore, the sustainability of educational institutions depends on their ability to balance technological advancement with meaningful human interaction in their recruitment practices.



Picture 1. Turba Strategy Cycle

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Turba (Turun Bareng) strategy remains an effective student recruitment approach despite the growing dominance of social media in educational marketing. Its effectiveness is reflected in three interconnected dimensions: building trust among prospective students and parents through direct interpersonal communication, reaching communities that are not optimally engaged through digital platforms, and increasing new student enrollment by converting trust into actual enrollment decisions. These findings demonstrate that educational marketing should not rely exclusively on digital promotion but should integrate interpersonal communication as a complementary strategy. Accordingly, the Turba strategy provides a practical model for educational institutions seeking to strengthen institutional credibility, expand community engagement, and achieve sustainable student recruitment in the era

of social media exclusivity.

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