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ANALYSIS OF ASABELLIA'S PERSONAL BRANDING STRATEGY THROUGH SELF-PRESENTATION AS A DIGITAL WRITER ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana Asabellia Audida, penulis fiksi digital yang dikenal di Instagram dengan akun @asabelliaa dan memiliki sekitar 86.700 pengikut, membangun personal brand-nya. Personal branding telah menjadi praktik umum di kalangan kreator media sosial, tetapi penelitian terdahulu sering belum menjelaskan bentuk konkret personal brand maupun motif di balik penyajiannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan strategi membangun personal brand di Instagram dalam konteks presentasi diri. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus instrumental. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara terbuka dengan penulis dan staf adminnya, observasi non-partisipan terhadap konten Instagram, serta dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis dengan model Miles dan Huberman yang terdiri atas reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Informan dipilih melalui pengambilan sampel purposif, dengan melibatkan Asabellia sebagai informan utama dan staf administrasinya sebagai informan pendukung. Konten Instagram dari feed, stories, dan highlights dikumpulkan melalui observasi non-partisipan dan dokumentasi. Kedua kerangka teori digunakan dengan peran yang saling melengkapi. Delapan hukum personal branding Montoya berfungsi sebagai indikator analitis untuk mengidentifikasi dimensi-dimensi merek pribadi Asabellia (apa yang dibangun), sedangkan strategi presentasi diri yang dikemukakan oleh Delamater dkk. digunakan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana dan mengapa dimensi-dimensi tersebut diekspresikan melalui praktik komunikasinya di Instagram (motif di baliknya). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedelapan hukum muncul dalam aktivitasnya dan diwujudkan melalui lima strategi presentasi diri: promosi diri (kepemimpinan dan terlihat), keteladanan (kepemimpinan dan kesatuan), mengambil hati (kepribadian dan kesatuan), pengelolaan penampilan (spesialisasi dan perbedaan), serta penyelarasan tindakan (keteguhan dan nama baik). Hubungan antara kedua kerangka tersebut tidak bersifat satu lawan satu. Strategi-strategi tersebut saling tumpang tindih, sehingga satu tindakan branding dapat mengandung lebih dari satu motif. Misalnya, keterbukaannya tentang latar belakang keluarga yang tidak utuh membangun kedekatan (mengambil hati) sekaligus menyampaikan keteguhan sebagai nilai (keteladanan). Berbeda dengan selebgram Pekanbaru pada penelitian terdahulu, ia justru membawa unsur panggung belakang, seperti kegagalan dan kesulitan, ke panggung depan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian presentasi diri dan personal brand dalam ilmu komunikasi dengan menunjukkan

bagaimana hukum (dimensi merek) dan strategi (motif pengekspresiannya) dapat diintegrasikan.

ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Digital Writer; Instagram; Personal Branding; Self-Presentation.

This study analyzes how Asabellia Audida, a digital fiction writer known on Instagram as @asabelliaa with about 86,700 followers, builds her personal brand. Personal branding has become a common practice among social media creators, yet earlier studies often do not describe the concrete form of the brand or the motives behind its presentation. This research aims to describe the strategies used to build a personal brand on Instagram within the context of self-presentation. A qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design was applied. Data were collected through open interviews with the writer and her admin staff, non-participant observation of Instagram content, and documentation, then analyzed with the Miles and Huberman model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, involving Asabellia as the key informant and her admin staff as a supporting informant. Instagram content from feeds, stories, and highlights was collected through non-participant observation and documentation. The two frameworks were used in complementary roles. Montoya's eight laws of personal branding served as analytical indicators to identify the dimensions of Asabellia's personal brand (what is built), while Delamater et al.'s self-presentation strategies were used to explain how and why these dimensions were expressed through her communication practices on Instagram (the motives behind them). The findings show that all eight laws appear in her activities and that they are enacted through five self-presentation strategies: self-promotion (leadership and visibility), exemplification (leadership and unity), ingratiation (personality and unity), managing appearance (specialization and distinctiveness), and aligning action (persistence and goodwill). The relationship between the two frameworks is not one-to-one. The strategies overlap, so a single branding act can carry more than one motive. For example, her disclosure of a broken-home background builds closeness (ingratiation) and conveys perseverance as a value (exemplification). Unlike the Pekanbaru celebrity grams in an earlier study, she brings back stage elements such as failure and difficulty into the front stage. The study contributes to research on self-presentation and personal brand in communication science by showing how the laws (dimensions of a brand) and the strategies (motives for expressing them) can be integrated.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Internet use keeps growing as people seek to meet their needs, including the growing need for social media. In 2024, Indonesia recorded 191 million social media users, of whom 167 million were active (Panggabean, 2024). Social media is an online medium that lets users participate, share, and create content such as blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, and virtual worlds (Kartini et al., 2023). Gamble and Gamble (2013) describe its characteristics as follows: messages reach many people, messages do not pass through a gatekeeper, messages tend to be received faster, and receivers decide when to interact.

Social media can also serve as an effective promotion medium because it reaches more audiences at a low cost (Qadir & Ramli, 2024; Yusbardini, 2024).

Instagram is one of the most popular platforms in Indonesia, with 122 million users or 47.3% of the population (Panggabean, 2024). One reason for its popularity is that users can share personal information in an enjoyable visual format (Situmorang & Hayati, 2023). The platform began as a place to share photos and videos, and it has since added features such as longer stories, interactive tools, live broadcasts, and phone and video calls. Various groups use these features to serve their interests, including building a positive image (Gamble & Gamble, 2013).

This development gives rise to micro-celebrities, who hold influence through social media rather than through television, magazines, or newspapers (Zein, 2019). Micro-celebrities must show distinctive expertise and uniqueness, so they need to apply a personal brand to their accounts. Personal branding has become a trend that asserts a person's image. People use visual and verbal stimuli in relationships to show their self-image to others (Attrill, 2015), and Instagram features support this (Rosdiana & Indrawati, 2024). A personal brand takes an individualistic approach that treats a person as a brand, because brands belong not only to organizations or companies but also to individuals.

Tasya Farasya, a beauty creator, is one figure seen as successful in applying personal branding. Social Blade data give her account B+ grade, which indicates a fairly good influence, with an engagement rate of 0.58%. Fadil Jaidi, with 13 million followers, receives a grade of A- and an engagement rate of 4.89%, which places him among influential accounts. These examples show that good use of Instagram features plays an important role in building a personal brand and a distinctive character.

Asabellia Audida differs from these two figures in terms of her professional background and the way she utilizes Instagram to establish her identity as a digital writer. She is a digital writer who focuses on romance fan fiction and actively uses Instagram through the account @asabelliaa, which had approximately 86,700 followers as of June 2026. In addition to interacting with her audience, she uses the platform to share her fictional works, writing activities, and creative processes. Several of her stories have also been published as books. Islamiati and Amalia (2024) found that social media X positively contributes 49.1% to increased reading interest, highlighting the potential of social media as a platform for promoting literary works and connecting writers with readers.

Social Blade data show that Asabellia's account receives a B+ grade, indicating a relatively stable estimated engagement level. Her engagement rate is also higher than those of Zarry Hendrik and Boy Candra, fellow writers with larger follower counts. Furthermore, she has an active reading community called Hacin, consisting of loyal readers of her works. The presence of this community indicates audience engagement and shared interests between Asabellia and her readers. These characteristics provide the basis for selecting Asabellia as the research subject. Her activities as a digital writer, use of Instagram to present her professional and personal identity, and interactions with

her reading community make her a relevant case for examining how personal branding is constructed through self-presentation strategies on Instagram.

Self-presentation theory, proposed by Erving Goffman, describes social interaction as a performance in which individuals act as actors for their conversation partners (Morissan, 2021). Jones and Pittman (1982) describe self-presentation as an effort to form impressions selectively so that a self-image fits the expectations of others. Delamater et al. (2018) list strategies such as managing appearance, ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, aligning actions, exemplification, and altercasting. A personal brand, in turn, is the perception or emotion others hold about the experience of a relationship with a person, and it develops through repeated interaction (McNally & Speak D., 2011). Montoya and Vandehey (2002) propose eight laws as the framework of a personal brand: leadership, personality, specialization, visibility, distinctiveness, persistence, unity, and goodwill.

Three earlier studies relate to this topic. Bahtra (2021) examined the marketing communication of PT Bentang Pustaka for the novel Supernova and found that Dewi Lestari served as the main message source, drawing on her strong personal brand. That study does not describe the form of the personal brand or the strategies that make it strong. Febrianti and Indrawati (2024) studied the self-presentation of Instagram celebrity grams in Pekanbaru through Goffman's dramaturgy and found differences between front stage and back stage in appearance and language. However, they describe these differences without explaining the motives behind them, and they focus on captions in the feed. Moudy and Winduwati (2023) found that a TikTok content creator, Eduardus Ivan, applied the personal branding elements of Rampersad (authenticity, integrity, consistency, specialization, authority, distinctiveness, relevance, visibility, persistence, and goodness), yet the study gives little evidence of how these values appear on social media.

These studies leave a gap. They do not explain, for a digital fiction writer, how a personal brand is concretely built and which self-presentation motives drive it. This study offers novelty by using Montoya's eight laws as analytical indicators and the self-presentation strategies of Delamater et al. (2018) to explain the motives behind each law, and by examining several Instagram features, namely feeds, stories, bio, and highlights. The research question is how Asabellia Audida builds a personal brand on Instagram. The aim is to describe her strategies within the context of self-presentation. Theoretically, the study enriches communication science on self-presentation and personal brand. Practically, it offers a reference for content creators, social media practitioners, and individuals who want to build a personal brand effectively on Instagram.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Type and Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach, a procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the subjects studied (Saat & Mania, 2020). The approach fits the aim of understanding the meaning and strategies through which

the subject builds a personal brand and gains the ability to influence others (Moleong, 2007). The research type is a case study. A case does not always refer to a problem, because success and excellence can also be the focus of study (Ahyar et al., 2020). Stake (1994) distinguishes intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies. This study uses the instrumental type. It examines one subject, an active writer, not only for the uniqueness of the case but to understand self-presentation strategies in the context of a personal brand in depth.

2.2 Research Subject, Location, and Time

The subject is Asabellia Audida and her Instagram account @asabelliaa. The study began with planning in November 2025, collected data until June 2026, and analyzed and interpreted the data at the end of July 2026. The researcher acted only as an observer.

2.3 Informants

Informants were selected through purposive sampling, which does not aim to represent a population but to gather as much information as possible according to the research purpose (Moleong, 2021). The criteria for key informants were (a) Asabellia as a digital writer, (b) her management team responsible for social media and the creative team, if any, and (c) willingness to be interviewed and to give information openly. The informants are Asabellia and her admin staff, Siti Nurhalimah (Alma), who has worked with her since 2023 and serves as supporting informant.

2.4 Data and Data Sources

Primary data came from interviews with key informants and non-participant observation of social media posts. Secondary data came from articles and news about the research object. Source triangulation and technique triangulation were applied to check data credibility (Sugiyono, 2016).

2.5 Data Collection Techniques

Three techniques collected the data. First, open interviews, which rely on general lines of questions developed according to the conditions in the interview (Saat & Mania, 2020), were chosen because the researcher could not know in advance what form the data would take. Asabellia was interviewed on 4 May 2026, with a follow-up interview afterwards, and Alma on 24 and 26 June 2026. Interview excerpts were translated from Indonesian into English. Second, non-participant observation examined posts on feeds, stories, and highlights. As of June 2026, the account had 806 feed posts. Third, documentation gathered available data, including related documents circulating online. The instruments were an interview guide, an observation sheet, and a document list.

2.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed following Miles et al. (2014) in three concurrent flows. Data reduction selected, focused, and simplified interview and documentation data on activities related to personal branding. Data display arranged the information in narrative text and tables. Conclusion drawing treated initial conclusions as tentative until supported by further evidence. Montoya's eight laws served as indicators to assess

and map the personal brand, and the self-presentation strategies of Delamater et al. (2018) served to explain how the subject builds, displays, and maintains these aspects.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research Object

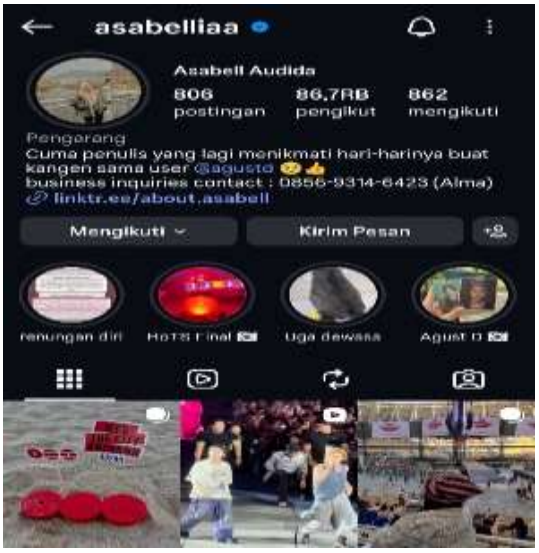


Figure 1. Asabellia's Instagram Account Profile

Asabellia Audida, called Kak Asa by her readers and followers, was born in Kediri on 22 March 1996 and now lives in Makassar. Since early childhood her life has been close to creativity, art, and literacy. Her mother, who enjoyed writing poems and short stories and staged art performances at home, influenced her talent, and in primary school she performed in a drama with her mother at the governor's office. She has managed the Instagram account @asabelliaa since June 2013. As of June 2026, the account holds 806 feed posts and 86,700 followers (Figure 1). She uses it to share daily life, experiences, and tips and processes of writing stories. She is known as friendly and humorous and often answers questions that arrive by direct message, and this friendliness and honesty give followers trust in her and keep them supporting her career.

She does not run her writing activities alone. Alma, her admin staff since 2023, handles brand collaboration, answers e-book buyers, and helps with book sales through WhatsApp, Shopee, and a dedicated admin account on Instagram, @admin.sepucuk_halu. She also helps manage the data of donation participants.

3.2 The Eight Laws of Personal Branding

3.2.1 The Law of Leadership

The law of leadership holds that a personal brand rests on the concept of power. The public needs leaders who make them confident in their choices, and leadership concerns the ability to influence and give direction, not only position (Montoya, 2002, as cited in Rubiyanto, 2024). Followers place Asabellia as a role model and consult her about digital literacy. She separates two audiences:

> *"Usually new writers ask for guidance, for example on how to promote or advice on writing media. With established writers, we mostly discuss, for example book production."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)

For beginners she acts as a mentor who shares strategies on promoting works, choosing effective writing platforms, and reaching major publishers. For established writers she acts as a discussion partner on book production management, cooperation with printers, and strategies for overcoming obstacles in writing. Her leadership also shows in a donation project for planting mangrove trees:

"I think this is one of the most influential activities. For example, the donation project for planting mangrove trees, with funds collected reaching tens of millions because they trust me, they were influenced. For example, I promote it on stories, then invite them to donate through the link provided. In return, for those who donate, I give a bonus e-book of my story. I am also transparent about the use of funds, I inform everything." (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)

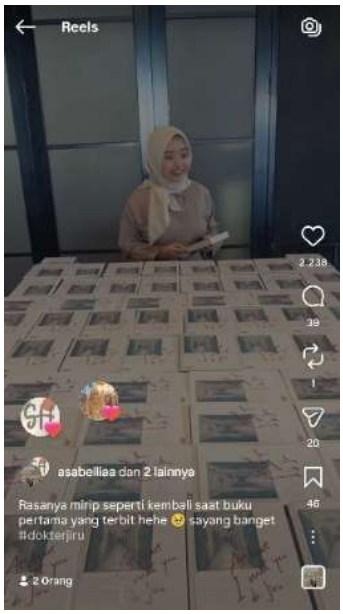


Figure 2. Asabellia's Reels on the Novel Publishing Process

Alma confirms that followers responded strongly and gave time and effort, not only moral or material support. She stated that she helps when Asabellia needs the data of donation participants, and that Asabellia looks for a team at the affected location through Instagram stories (Alma, 26 June 2026). To convince followers, Asabellia often tells the process behind her writing, from the origin of an idea to publication. She describes herself as a storyteller, and she recounts that the story *At Least I Met You dr. Jiru* began from a dream she posted on her story, drew positive responses, and became a story of 50 episodes on TikTok. She also did research with an orthopedic doctor, made content during the publication period, and sometimes gave light spoilers. Documentation shows a reel in which she sits behind a table of published books she is about to sign, with a caption about her feelings on seeing her published work (Figure 2).

3.2.2 The Law of Personality

The law of personality states that a personal brand does not focus on strengths and perfection but on being as one is. A person can build a personal brand with a good personality without ignoring shortcomings, and the law does not demand perfection. Asabellia is open about the difficulties she faces as a writer:

> *"I am a typically open person, so followers vent to me. In the end I also share the struggles I experience. Being open about the difficulties I face is important, because I also want to be seen as myself, an ordinary human being, a best-selling writer whose books sometimes also flop."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)



Figure 3. Asabellia's Post on Book Pricing

A documented post supports this. In it she discusses how she sets book prices, print runs, and production costs, and she mentions readers with limited finances, showing that her works are not always easy for every reader to reach (Figure 3). She also uses humor to create closeness:

> *"That is why I sometimes post memes, funny cat memes, to describe life's screams, so people feel more relatable. I want them to feel that I am like a fun friend."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)



Figure 4. Cat Memes About the Struggles of Writing

In one post, a cat meme expresses her exhaustion after working on nonfiction writing, and she compares her ability to write fiction with her difficulty in writing nonfiction (Figure 4). Alma says that Asabellia's character on social media matches her daily personality: relaxed, with light jokes when she interacts with followers (Alma, 24 June 2026).



Figure 5. Fans' Reactions to the Plan for a Sad Ending

Documented comments show followers protesting a planned sad ending in very familiar language, such as "*No no ya kak, berdosa tau*..." ("No, no, sis, it's a sin, you know...") and "*ente mau bikin sad ending, astaga*" ("you want to make a sad ending, good grief") (Figure 5). The word *ente* shows that followers feel comfortable and treat her as a peer, not as a stiff public figure. Other comments, such as "life is at its hardest, and I am reading a sad ending instead" and "life is chaotic like this...", indicate that followers use her account as entertainment to refresh their minds. She answered the protests with laughing-crying emojis, which fits the humor she described in the interview.

3.2.3 The Law of Specialization

The law of specialization means full mastery of one concentrated area of excellence, competence, or achievement. Showing every field without a special skill only lowers attention, whereas specialization creates an identity with a distinct value. Asabellia consistently highlights her writing ability on Instagram, with romance as her main genre:

> *"I lean more toward romance. There are plans to make horror, maybe comedy or religious. But I will never get bored of romance, because it is like my toy, the most fun for me. Perhaps next year I will try nonfiction like self-improvement."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)

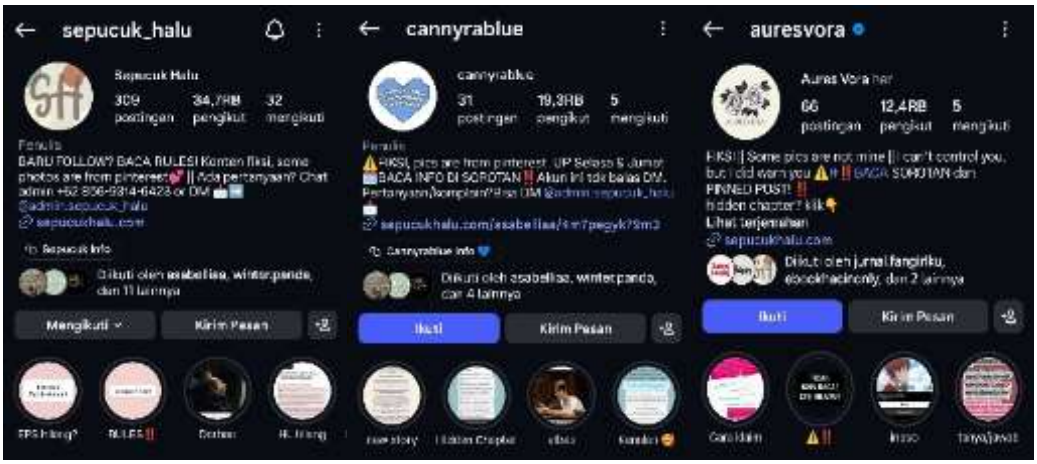


Figure 6. Asabellia's Writing Account

She runs three writing accounts separated by target readers (Figure 6). The account @sepucuk_halu focuses on post-marriage romance for readers aged 21 and older who are in college, working, or married. The account @cannyrablue focuses on teenage romance for teenage and early adult readers, and its male leads are poor or building a career, ordinary young men, to teach that simplicity can still make people fall in love. The account @auresvora focuses on dark romance, for example mafia stories with complicated relationships, for adult readers who like ambiguity. She explained that the aim is tidiness, because in one year she may have 10 different story ideas, and she prefers separate accounts to a pile of stories in one account. In a follow-up interview she likened the three accounts to a restaurant menu, so that readers choose according to taste and need not follow every account. The Linktree on her main account lists only @sepucuk_halu because it has the most followers, she has no plan to list the others, and she will keep the genre division that she prepared long ago.



Figure 7. Followers' Reposts About the Novel Asabellia

A follower's photo of a bookshelf lined with her novels shows that her works have become an identity attached to her (Figure 7). Alma adds that she has login access to several accounts but never tinkers with them without instruction, and that all content comes from Asabellia (Alma, 24 June 2026).

3.2.4 The Law of Visibility

The law of visibility requires continuous self-promotion, because an effective personal brand must be seen repeatedly by others. Asabellia schedules story updates three to five times a week. When she is busy, she posts short content so that the account looks active:

> *"Update schedule is usually three times a week, if in the mood up to five times a week. If busy, usually no update at all, but sometimes I replace it with short content. So they still have something to read and the account is not dead. Because if left alone, they might think it is no longer continued, so that is my effort to keep the account active."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)



Figure 8. Asabellia's Post About the Story Update

She usually announces an update at noon or in the afternoon before the night update, to invite interaction and to reduce the risk of shadowban, since she learned that monotonous posting can trigger it. She asks readers to reply first, so that they stand by when the update arrives, and she also uses an Instagram broadcast channel so that the update reaches readers' notifications directly. Her three accounts allow cross-promotion: when she wants to write in a rarely used account, the two more active accounts repost it, helped by the Instagram feed repost feature. She calls this *ternak akun*, literally breeding accounts. Documentation shows her explaining that a story whose update was requested could not be updated that day and would continue the next day (Figure 8). In that case she had opened a general Q&A session, yet followers still asked about the continuation of a story featuring the main character Mas Derhan, and she answered transparently in a familiar tone. Alma says that Asabellia stays visible by replying to comments, opening Q&A sessions, and giving extra gifts on some sales, which makes followers comfortable (Alma, 24 June 2026).

3.2.5 The Law of Distinctiveness

The law of distinctiveness holds that an effective personal brand shows a different and unique way that leaves a strong impression. Asabellia sees her difference in her openness about her hobbies:

> *"In my opinion, I am a writer who strongly identifies as a fangirl. So not only writing, I also like to post my fangirling activities. I am quite open about my hobbies and what I like. I do not know about other writers, but if I may compare, I am quite active in fangirling activities, including supporting donation projects that are usually held."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)

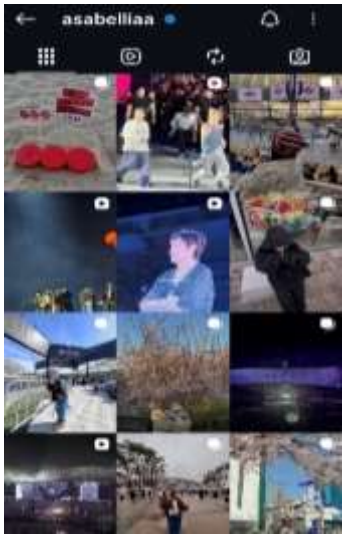


Figure 9. Asabellia's Instagram Feed

Documented feed posts show activities related to K-Pop and her favorite idols, so she presents not only her writing activity but also her interests (Figure 9). The reduced data also record that she led an environmentally friendly social project that was covered by Korean media. A second marker is the panda. She likes pandas, her earlier stories contained panda elements, and followers send panda gifts such as dolls, ear muffs, slippers, and wrapping paper. Her online shop is named Winter Panda, and her game username also contains panda elements.



Figure 10. Praise from Followers for Asabellia's Writing Skills

A follower's response in the documentation praises her ability to imagine a music video concept just from listening to a song by her favorite idol, which shows that the combination of writer and K-Pop fangirl identities is recognized directly by followers (Figure 10). Alma adds that her writing style also sets her apart: light, relaxed, without heavy language or description, with a flowing narration and chemistry built through dialogue (Alma, 24 June 2026).

3.2.6 The Law of Persistence

The law of persistence recognizes that building a personal brand takes varying amounts of time and does not always succeed quickly. It calls for perseverance, patience, and self-belief, while allowing a person to change the brand if needed. Asabellia's track record spans more than a decade. She began writing around 2009 or 2010, posting Justin Bieber fan fiction through the notes feature on Facebook. In 2013 she moved to Wattpad because of regulation changes on Facebook that affected her writing. In 2020, Wattpad commercialized a coin system and changed its algorithm in ways that hurt writers' reach, so she moved to Instagram during the pandemic and used the Instagram story feature to present her stories. In 2023 to 2024 she experimented with bubble chat stories on TikTok, and one story was popular and published. Because the TikTok algorithm felt less pleasant, she returned to Instagram in 2025 and added accounts with different story vibes. She created @cannyrablue first, while @auresvora was made only a few months before the interview. She explained why she stays on Instagram rather than X:

> *"I prefer Instagram because I feel I fit better with people who are Instagram users (...) For me, Instagram users can still understand, based on my experience. So I think it takes a strong mentality to write there (X), and I am not ready to jump in. That is why I am more comfortable on Instagram."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)



Figure 11. A Message from Asabellia's Loyal Readers

A documented direct message supports her persistence (Figure 11). A loyal reader wrote that she had enjoyed Asabellia's romance novel *Hidden*, first published on Wattpad, since she was in the fifth grade of primary school and now attends university. This shows that a long-held genre keeps reader loyalty even when the writer migrates across digital platforms.

3.2.7 The Law of Unity

The law of unity requires that the image shown matches daily life, whether in values, behavior, or lifestyle. Asabellia is open about her family background and her struggle

through hardship without privilege, and she adds the moral message that past limitations should not kill future dreams:

> *"Besides writing, I also often vent about my past as a child from a broken home. I always say, 'Guys, broken home is not always bad.' I am quite open about the struggles I experienced in the past, even though my family's economy was not good and I had no privilege, I still had many dreams. So it is not uncommon for readers to tell me they have also published a book."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)



Figure 12. Asabellia's Post About Her Past Experiences

A documented post supports this, in which she tells of her past conditions, including the limits she faced since school and the economic struggle she went through with her family (Figure 12). Alma confirms that no meaningful difference exists between her character on social media and her daily life: she looks relaxed and likes to share, and she gives tips and solutions to followers both on social media and behind the scenes (Alma, 24 June 2026).

3.2.8 The Law of Goodwill

The law of goodwill states that a positive public image helps a personal brand last, and that it can raise respect and trust. Asabellia sets age limits for stories with adult elements and places disclaimers on writing accounts meant for adult readers:

> *"In that account I already put a disclaimer and made it clear. I say, 'Make sure you read with your own account, do not use someone else's account. Especially moms, do not use your child's account to read stories in this account.' It is the duty of parents to supervise their children's social media use, but the disclaimer I stress is also my way of trying my best to build a fence."* (Asabellia, 4 May 2026)



Figure 13. Disclaimer: Age Restrictions on the @auresvora Account



Figure 14. Reader Comments on Age Restrictions for Adult Novels

The documentation shows such a disclaimer in the highlights of the @auresvora account, reminding readers to access stories according to the stated age and not to use another person's account (Figure 13). In another interaction (Figure 14), a follower reported that her grandmother reads Asabellia's novel while she forbids her younger sibling to read it, and Asabellia confirmed with the reply *"do not let your little brother read, there are many dangerous scenes."* Alma adds that Asabellia always stresses honesty and keeping reader trust. When sales of printed novels or e-books run into problems, buyers receive a solution or compensation, and every complaint is answered kindly and begins with an apology, as Asabellia directs: *"What Kak Asa stresses most is being friendly and always apologizing first whenever there is a complaint or a less good response. Not only in that condition, in any condition"* (Alma, 24 June 2026).

Table 1 summarizes the reduced findings for the eight laws together with the self-presentation strategy that explains each of them.

Table 1. Summary Of Reduced Findings

Law	Key findings	Self-presentation strategy

The law of leadership	Storytelling about the writing process; mentoring beginners and discussing book production with established writers	Self-promotion; self-promotion and exemplification
The law of personality	Openness about difficulties, including books that flop; humor through memes; admin confirms a consistent personality	Ingratiation
The law of specialization	Romance as the main genre; three accounts separated by reader segment	Managing appearance
The law of visibility	Three to five updates a week; short content when busy; announcements before updates; broadcast channel and cross-promotion; active replies	Self-promotion
The law of distinctiveness	Fangirl identity; panda icon; light writing style; environmental social project	Managing appearance
The law of persistence	More than a decade of writing; platform moves from Facebook to Wattpad to Instagram; choice of Instagram over X	Aligning action
The law of unity	Openness about a broken home and no privilege; admin confirms the same character on and off social media	Ingratiation and exemplification
The law of goodwill	Age disclaimers on adult accounts; readers follow the rule	Aligning action

Source: Primary data 2026 (interviews and observation)

3.3 Discussion

The reduced data show that the eight laws are realized through five self-presentation strategies of Delamater et al. (2018). The discussion below takes each strategy in turn, relates it to theory, and compares it with earlier studies.

The relationship between the eight laws of personal branding and the five self-presentation strategies is not necessarily one-to-one. The findings indicate that a single personal branding activity may serve more than one self-presentation motive, depending on the impression that Asabellia seeks to establish. For this reason, the analysis considers not only the activities displayed on Instagram but also Asabellia's stated motivations, the responses of her followers, and supporting information from the informant. This approach makes it possible to identify how particular activities communicate competence, moral values, approachability, distinctiveness, consistency, and responsibility, while connecting them to the relevant laws of personal branding.

3.3.1 Self-Promotion

Self-promotion is an effort to show competence so that it is recognized in the field one masters (Delamater et al., 2018). This strategy is used most in the laws of leadership and visibility. Under leadership, Asabellia makes herself a reliable mentor and discussion partner and adjusts her interaction to her counterpart: guidance on promotion and platform choice for beginners, and talk about book production management for senior writers. By doing so she deliberately shows competence, expertise, and experience in handling conflicts and difficulties in the writing process, which builds a positive impression as a writer. Under visibility, the same strategy takes a more technical form. She updates stories three to five times a week, keeps the account active with short

content when busy, announces updates beforehand, and uses the broadcast channel and cross-promotion to keep her content reaching readers.

The empirical evidence further demonstrates how this activity reflects the law of leadership. In the interview, Asabellia explained that she provides beginner writers with guidance on promoting their works and selecting suitable writing platforms, while discussions with more experienced writers tend to focus on book production management (Asabellia, 4 May 2026). This distinction indicates that her role is not merely to offer general advice but to share knowledge relevant to the needs of different groups of writers. Through this activity, self-promotion is reflected in the presentation of her writing competence and experience, while the law of leadership is established through her position as a reference and discussion partner for other writers.

The posting frequency is supported by Asabellia's explanation that she usually updates her stories three to five times a week and replaces longer updates with short content when she is busy. She stated that this practice is intended to prevent followers from assuming that a story has been discontinued and to keep the account active (Asabellia, 4 May 2026). She also announces upcoming updates, uses Instagram's broadcast channel, and reposts content across her three writing accounts to expand audience reach. These practices demonstrate that visibility is not achieved through frequent posting alone, but through deliberate efforts to maintain communication and audience engagement. Thus, the law of visibility is realized through self-promotion because her continued presence also keeps her identity and writing activities recognizable to followers.

This finding agrees with Febrianti and Indrawati (2024), who found that one informant, Murni (@murnifahira), consciously posted an Instagram story every day to maintain her existence. Both cases keep an account visible through consistent posting. The difference is that Murni uses Instagram stories simply as a tool to keep her existence, whereas Asabellia develops the strategy through cross-promotion among three accounts and the use of a broadcast channel.

3.3.2 Exemplification

Exemplification presents the self as moral, full of integrity, and worth following (Delamater et al., 2018). It appears in the laws of leadership and unity. Under leadership, Asabellia positions herself as a mentor and discussion partner for fellow writers, and she uses her writing in social activity by giving e-books to donors as appreciation. Under unity, exemplification appears in her openness about being a child of divorce who grew up without economic privilege yet still reached her dream of becoming a writer. This honest life narrative motivated her followers, and some were even encouraged to write. She does not create a false persona. She touches her followers' hearts and becomes an example for others.

A more concrete example of exemplification under the law of leadership can be seen in Asabellia's mangrove tree-planting donation project. She explained that the project collected donations amounting to tens of millions of rupiah because her followers trusted her initiative. She promoted the project through Instagram Stories, directed

followers to the donation link, and provided e-books of her stories as a form of appreciation for donors. She also emphasized that she informed followers about the use of the collected funds (Asabellia, 4 May 2026). This activity reflects exemplification because she presents herself as someone who contributes to a social cause and demonstrates responsibility through transparency. At the same time, it reinforces the law of leadership because her ability to mobilize followers shows that she has gained their trust and can encourage collective action.

3.3.3 Ingratiation

Ingratiation aims to make a person look attractive, liked, and accepted in an environment, through appearance or behavior (Delamater et al., 2018). It appears in the laws of personality and unity. Under personality, Asabellia is open about a life that does not always run smoothly, and she shows a relaxed and humorous side through cat memes that describe her complaints and fatigue. Admitting weakness and using humor are concrete forms of ingratiation, because they present her as closer and as someone with everyday experiences that others share. Under unity, ingratiation returns through her openness about a broken home and limited childhood economy, which wins followers' hearts through a touching past.

This interpretation is supported by Asabellia's statement that she deliberately shares her struggles because she wants followers to see her as an ordinary person, even though she is known as a best-selling writer whose books do not always achieve the expected results (Asabellia, 4 May 2026). Her Instagram posts discussing book prices, printing quantities, production costs, and readers' economic limitations provide concrete examples of this openness. She also explained that she uses humorous cat memes to express her daily frustrations because she wants followers to relate to her and perceive her as an enjoyable friend (Asabellia, 4 May 2026). This motive is consistent with Alma's observation that Asabellia's interactions with readers are generally relaxed and often include jokes (Alma, 24 June 2026). Therefore, these activities reflect ingratiation under the law of personality because they reduce the distance between the writer and her followers and encourage an approachable, relatable impression.

The strategy can be examined further through selective self-presentation, the choice of certain characteristics, qualities, abilities, or attributes to form a positive judgment from others (Delamater et al., 2018). It has two forms, self-enhancement, which stresses one's strengths, and self-deprecation, which presents the self modestly by admitting shortcomings or limits. The data show that self-deprecation plays a clear part in winning her followers. It relates to her wish to keep a human side even though she is known as a writer with achievements. She shares not only successes but also experiences in which her works did not reach the hoped-for results, and she uses humor and memes to describe daily experiences, including tiredness from writing. She therefore does not present herself only through achievements but also through limits, which builds a human and closer impression.

This differs from Febrianti and Indrawati (2024), who found that all the Pekanbaru celebrity grams they studied hid their back stage to show their best display on Instagram and kept their relaxed side for real life. Under Goffman's dramaturgy, used in that study, this is a normal thing to happen. Asabellia does the opposite and brings back stage elements, namely weakness and failure, into her Instagram front stage. The difference in strategy can be understood from the kind of image each party builds. The Pekanbaru celebrity grams build an image based on visual aesthetics, where perfection is the main capital, while Asabellia builds an image based on the values and narrative of honest writing.

3.3.4 Managing Appearance

Managing appearance manages how one looks through clothing, props, dialect, and gesture (Delamater et al., 2018). In digital space, appearance refers not only to physical clothing but to how the whole visual display, language style, and type of content are managed to build a certain impression. The strategy appears in the laws of specialization and distinctiveness. Under specialization, Asabellia consistently pursues romance fiction and manages her digital appearance according to reader segmentation: @sepucuk_halu for adult readers of marriage romance, @cannyrablue for teenage romance, and @auresvora for adult readers of dark romance. The separation also keeps her personal profile tidy and makes it easier for new readers who visit her page.

Compared with Moudy and Winduwati (2023), the TikTok creator Eduardus Ivan also applied strict specialization in a fashion niche, which proved effective in building a memorable identity. The two differ in how they hold their focus. Eduardus Ivan uses one account with one consistent identity, while Asabellia develops specialization in three separate layers that still sit under one identity, a writer of romance fiction.

The division of these accounts is supported by Asabellia's explanation that each account is intended for a different type of reader. The @sepucuk_halu account focuses on post-marriage romance for adult readers, @cannyrablue presents teenage romance, and @auresvora is intended for adult readers interested in dark romance (Asabellia, 4 May 2026). She explained that separating the accounts helps organize the different story ideas and allows readers to choose content according to their preferences. This practice demonstrates managing appearance because she deliberately arranges the presentation of her writing identity through distinct account themes and audience segments. It also strengthens the law of specialization by making her focus on romance fiction more clearly recognizable to different groups of readers.

Under distinctiveness, Asabellia does not limit herself to being a writer but also shows her personal side, such as her love of K-Pop and her involvement in fandom activities. The consistent panda visual, seen in her online shop Winter Panda, panda-themed attributes, and panda-themed gifts, adds to this. These can be deepened with the concept of physical appearance and props, which explains that impressions of a person form not only from physical appearance and clothing but also from attributes and objects used and placed around them. The repeated panda element and the fangirling shared on Instagram are attributes that complete her appearance as a writer, so her identity centers not only on being a writer but also on personal interests that become her mark.

The distinctiveness of Asabellia's personal brand is also reflected in her writing and communication style. Alma described her writing as light, relaxed, flowing, and not overly dependent on complicated descriptions, with dialogue used to develop chemistry between characters (Alma, 24 June 2026). In addition, the documentation of followers' responses shows that her ability to imagine music video concepts from songs by her favorite K-pop idols is recognized by her audience. These findings indicate that her distinctiveness does not rely solely on her identity as a K-pop fan or her association with pandas, but is also reflected in the recognizable characteristics of her writing and interaction style. Through managing appearance, these elements are consistently presented as attributes that distinguish her personal brand from other writers.

The concept of regions, which consists of front regions and back regions (Delamater et al., 2018), also explains how she manages the information shown to followers. Front regions are situations in which a person presents the self to others, and back regions are spaces that others cannot observe directly, where a person prepares or carries out the activities behind the public appearance. Her posts about works, activities, and daily life belong to her public appearance on Instagram. The three writing accounts can be seen as front stage, where followers are given a "menu" with a clear identity in each account. At the same time, she chooses to bring experiences that usually stay back stage, such as the writing process, failure, and difficulty, into her Instagram content. She therefore manages not only what is shown but also which parts of her personal side and writing process are revealed to followers.

3.3.5 Aligning Action

Aligning action is used when a person faces a difficult situation or an environmental obstacle and adjusts actions so that behavior is still judged reasonable, relevant, and acceptable to the audience (Delamater et al., 2018). It appears in the laws of persistence and goodwill. Under persistence, her moves from Facebook to Wattpad to Instagram, with TikTok as an experiment, show that she keeps adapting and shifting her communication medium when a change disturbs her activity as a writer. Although she changed writing media several times, she carried the same identity, a writer of romance fiction with the same reader community. The change therefore occurred at the level of the writing medium, not of writing identity.

The continuity of this identity can be traced through Asabellia's writing journey. She began publishing fanfiction through Facebook Notes around 2009 or 2010, moved to Wattpad in 2013 following changes to Facebook's regulations, and later shifted to Instagram in 2020 after changes to Wattpad's features, monetization system, and algorithm affected her writing activities. She also experimented with TikTok through bubble-chat stories around 2023–2024 before returning to Instagram as her main writing platform (Asabellia, 4 May 2026). Her decision to remain on Instagram was also influenced by her perception that its audience and interaction style were more suitable for her. These findings demonstrate that aligning action is reflected in her ability to adjust the platform and communication medium in response to changing conditions without abandoning her identity as a romance writer. This adaptability strengthens the law of

persistence because her writing activity and relationship with readers continue despite changes in digital platforms.

This is similar to Moudy and Winduwati (2023), who showed that Eduardus Ivan kept up his activity despite negative comments. Asabellia likewise keeps her activity as a writer when the platforms she uses change. The difference lies in the form of obstacle and action: Eduardus Ivan persisted amid negative comments, whereas Asabellia adjusted her medium by changing platform. Adjustment to conditions can thus take different forms while the displayed identity is maintained.

Under goodwill, aligning action relates to her effort to adjust her actions to prevailing social norms and expectations. Delamater et al. (2018) describe two forms, disclaimers and accounts. Disclaimers are statements made before an action to anticipate negative judgment or misunderstanding, and the data show that Asabellia applies them through age limits on accounts that hold adult romance content. The disclaimers make clear that content is meant for readers of suitable age and prevent misunderstanding. Through this action she shows that she carries out her writing activity while attending to her responsibility to readers and to prevailing norms.

The law of goodwill is also reflected in how Asabellia handles readers' concerns and complaints. Alma explained that Asabellia emphasizes friendly communication and instructs her team to begin responses to complaints with an apology. When problems occur in the sale of printed books or e-books, buyers are also provided with solutions or compensation (Alma, 24 June 2026). These practices complement the age disclaimers on @auresvora because they demonstrate that Asabellia's responsibility extends beyond setting boundaries for adult content to maintaining trust in her interactions and transactions with readers. In this context, aligning action is reflected in her efforts to respond appropriately to readers' expectations and concerns, while the law of goodwill is strengthened through responsible and considerate treatment of her audience.

3.3.6 Answering the Research Question

The research question asked how Asabellia builds her personal brand on Instagram. The findings show that the eight laws of Montoya are manifested through five self-presentation strategies, with relationships that may overlap depending on the motives behind each activity. Self-promotion supports leadership through her role as a mentor and discussion partner, and visibility through consistent updates and cross-promotion. Exemplification is reflected in her participation in social activities, such as the mangrove donation project, and in the moral message conveyed through her personal life story. Ingratiation is evident in her openness about personal struggles and the use of humor to establish closeness with followers. Managing appearance supports specialization through the segmentation of her three writing accounts and distinctiveness through her K-pop interests, panda associations, and recognizable writing style. Meanwhile, aligning action supports persistence through her adaptation to changing digital platforms and goodwill through age disclaimers and responsible responses to readers' complaints. Importantly, the disclosure of her family background demonstrates that a single activity may serve both ingratiation and exemplification: it creates emotional closeness while communicating perseverance as a value. These findings indicate that Asabellia's personal brand is constructed not only through the activities she displays but also through the motives and values underlying those activities.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Asabellia constructs her personal brand on Instagram through the consistent application of all eight of Montoya's laws of personal branding, which are enacted through five self-presentation strategies. Self-promotion is reflected in leadership and visibility, exemplification in leadership and unity, ingratiation in personality and unity, managing appearance in specialization and distinctiveness, and aligning action in persistence and goodwill. These findings demonstrate that personal branding is not merely a matter of maintaining a recognizable image on social media, but also involves the deliberate presentation of competence, personal values, character, and responsibility in interactions with the audience.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how Montoya's eight laws of personal branding can be understood through Delamater et al.'s five self-presentation strategies. Rather than operating as separate or mutually exclusive categories, the two frameworks are interconnected: the laws explain the dimensions through which a personal brand is constructed, while the self-presentation strategies explain how individuals communicate and enact those dimensions through their behavior and online activities. The findings also reveal that the relationship between the two frameworks is not necessarily one-to-one. A single activity may involve multiple self-presentation motives, as illustrated by Asabellia's disclosure of her personal background, which reflects ingratiation through the creation of emotional closeness and exemplification through the communication of perseverance as a value. This finding provides a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between personal branding and self-presentation, particularly in the context of social media, where personal narratives, professional identity, and audience interaction may operate simultaneously.

Practically, these findings suggest that writers and digital content creators should develop their personal brands by aligning their online presentation with their actual values, character, and professional activities. Demonstrating competence through knowledge-sharing and consistent content, managing account presentation according to audience segments, and maintaining distinctive characteristics can help establish a recognizable identity. At the same time, showing a human side, including personal struggles and failures, can foster a more approachable relationship with audiences, provided that such openness is balanced with appropriate boundaries and responsibility. The findings also highlight the importance of adapting to platform changes, maintaining communication with followers, and responding responsibly to audience concerns. Therefore, an effective personal brand does not necessarily depend on presenting a perfect image, but on combining professional credibility, authenticity, consistency, and meaningful audience engagement.

This study has limitations. The data were obtained primarily from Asabellia's perspective and from an administrator who works with her; therefore, the perspectives of followers as recipients of her personal branding activities have not been explored comprehensively. Future research could include followers as informants or employ a quantitative approach to examine the extent to which audience perceptions correspond

with the self-presentation strategies and personal branding dimensions identified in this study. Furthermore, because aligning action plays an important role in this case, particularly in adapting to changes in digital platforms and maintaining responsible interactions with audiences, future studies could examine this strategy more deeply in the context of social media personal branding. Comparative studies involving writers from different genres, platforms, and audience segments could also determine whether the relationship between the five self-presentation strategies and Montoya's eight laws applies across different contexts.

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