



The Construction of Public Identity of AI Influencers through Personal Public Relations: The Case of Serenay

Kişisel Halkla İlişkilerle Yapay Zekâ Influencerlarının Kamusal Kimlik İnşası: Serenay Örneği

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ABSTRACT: This study examines AI influencer practices on Instagram from the perspective of personal public relations. It aims to reveal how these practices produce mechanisms for constructing public identity. The sample consists of permanent posts shared over a year by ai.serenay (@ai.serenay), selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed descriptively with MAXQDA using a thematic framework based on Judy Motion's approach. The findings show that the account's public identity is built around six strategies: historical narrative, positioning, commodification, mediatization, aestheticization, and normative positioning. The artificial persona gains legitimacy through local belonging, using collective memory and national symbols. It is positioned as an innovator through discourses such as "first," "pioneering," and "the future." The persona aligns with the platform's logic of visibility and produces ethical legitimacy through collaborations, trends, visual performances, and emphasis on transparency. In conclusion, the study shows that AI influencers are not just digital figures producing visibility. They also act as new communication actors who acquire meaning through personal public relations strategies.

Key Words: *Artificial Intelligence, AI Influencer, Social Media, Personal Public Relations, Identity Construction.*

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Öz: Bu çalışma, Instagram'daki yapay zekâ influencer pratiklerini kişisel halkla ilişkiler perspektifiyle inceleyerek bu pratiklerin kamusal kimlik inşasında nasıl bir stratejik işleyiş ürettiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın örneklemini, amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen ai.serenay (@ai.serenay) hesabının bir yıllık dönemde paylaştığı kalıcı gönderiler oluşturmaktadır. Veriler, Judy Motion'ın kişisel halkla ilişkiler yaklaşımından hareketle oluşturulan temalar çerçevesinde MAXQDA programı kullanılarak betimsel analiz ile çözümlenmiştir. Bulgular, incelenen hesapta kamusal kimliğin tarihsel anlatı, konumlandırma, metalaştırma, medyatikleştirme, estetikleştirme ve normatif konumlandırma olmak üzere altı strateji etrafında kurgulandığını göstermektedir. Buna göre yapay personanın kolektif hafıza ve ulusal semboller aracılığıyla yerel aidiyet temelinde meşrulaştırıldığı; "ilk", "öncü" ve "gelecek" gibi söylemlerle yenilikçi bir özne olarak konumlandırıldığı; iş birlikleri, trendler, görsel performanslar ve şeffaflık vurguları yoluyla hem platformun görünürlük mantığına uyum sağladığı hem de etik meşruiyet ürettiği görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak çalışma, AI influencerların yalnızca estetik ve ticari görünürlük üreten dijital figürler değil, kişisel halkla ilişkiler stratejileri aracılığıyla kamusal anlam kazanan yeni iletişim aktörleri olarak değerlendirilebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yapay Zeka, Yapay Zeka Influencer, Sosyal Medya, Kişisel Halkla İlişkiler, Kimlik İnşası.*

INTRODUCTION

Performances on social media profiles act as digital "stages" where entities reshape their self-presentation for personal public relations (Arıcı & Kılınc, 2023, p. 398). AI influencers use interactions with followers, guided by affective analysis and customized content strategies, to create a "perceptual environment" that encourages trust and social belonging. Digital representation goes beyond appearance, forming a "digital body" enhanced with algorithmically generated data so that AI characters appear authentically human. The legitimacy of these characters comes from AI-powered PR messages in an online emotion economy, shaping emotional reactions and producing consent (Konat, 2025, p. 10).

Digital characters use data-driven crisis management and community feedback to develop strategies, shifting traditional PR to an algorithm-based model of "surveillance and representation" (Konat, 2025, p. 12). AI characters not only market products but also communicate by converting follower engagement into precise data flows (Soldan, 2025, pp. 394–396). They manage digital records as symbolic capital (Arıcı & Kılınc, 2023, p. 403) and balance technical skill with moral responsibility in public relations.

AI virtual influencers seek to overcome the "uncanny valley" and gain user acceptance, making authenticity a technical and emotional challenge (Erdoğan & Soydaş, 2024, p. 2). Managing personas through social media data establishes digital legitimacy (Yılmaz Tiryaki & Özgen, 2024, p. 93). These non-human entities create emotional bonds that blur boundaries between technology and human beings' communication, redefining trust and loyalty in public relations (Men, Zhou, Jin, & Thelen, 2023).

In personal public relations, a public identity is intentionally crafted and marketed. Judy Motion's "formative mode" describes this active creation of identity (Motion, 1999, p. 465). AI influencers, lacking a physical form, rely entirely on this process. Their social media presence demonstrates Nessmann's "commodification of the personal brand," where a person is packaged for the "visibility industry" (Nessmann, 2010, p. 377). Building online identity involves "idealized self-presentation" (Arıcı & Kılınc, 2023, pp. 398–399). Instagram serves as a stage for AI influencers to connect, adopting the platform's style. Bridgen draws attention to the professional effort required, noting that visibility and interaction make the personal brand an "interface" tied to institutional success (Bridgen, 2011, p. 63).

The public accepts digital personas through "value narratives" and framing strategies (Maiorescu, 2017, p. 255), which influence followers' perceptions, especially during crises or when forming parasocial bonds. Long-term acceptance requires ethical legitimacy and transparency. Huang links ethical influence to honesty; Hove and Paek stress the role of personal values in resolving moral challenges (Hove & Paek, 2017, p. 95; Huang, 2000, p. 305). Ethical consistency is fundamental to sustaining digital identity, raising questions about how AI figures manage brand images and underscoring the need for advanced public relations research methods.

AI influencers are known for visibility, interaction, authenticity, and digital presentation, yet few studies examine their public identity construction in personal public relations. Motion describes this model as one in which individuals are formed, placed, and publicly promoted, a neglected area of research. She identifies the "formative mode" (active creation) and "advisory mode" (consultative promotion), and explains identity formation through "technologies of the self" like narrative, positioning, and commodification (Motion, 2000, pp. 33–37). This study treats AI influencers as personae constructed and publicly shared, with the aim of addressing this research gap.

This study examines how AI influencers use Instagram through a personal public relations lens. It aims to show the strategies behind the construction of public identity. Motion's personal public relations approach is used as the main theory. Here, public identity is not fixed but built through visibility, positioning, differentiation, and relationship management. This view helps analyze how AI influencers, as digital personae, act as both content creators and identity shapers in the public sphere. The research centers on AI influencer social media, selecting the AI influencer. Serenay (@ai.serenay) account as a case study. The study looks at posts made between January 1 and December 31, 2025. Only permanent Instagram posts in the feed were analyzed, and the data were described using MAXQDA.

1. Visibility and Social Media Strategies of AI Influencers

Virtual influencers meticulously imitate the everyday practices, emotional expressions, and social exchanges of real human influencers to gain visibility and legitimacy on social media. For example, they create the illusion of “real presence” through restaurant visits, museum trips, or photographs shared with real people (Emecen & Aydin, 2024). This strategy of mimicry positions the character in followers’ minds as a human social actor, thereby overcoming the algorithmic uncanny valley effect and enabling increased engagement rates (Ju, Kim, & Im, 2024, p. 2). In this way, virtual influencers establish a controlled architecture of visibility that exceeds standard models and efficiently supports brands’ strategic public relations objectives.

The intimacy created by this process leads people to see these artificial beings as “imaginary friends.” These figures fulfill social needs not met in real life. Consistent behavior, as evidenced by human-like traits, makes the simulation seem real and influences buyers (Erdoğan & Soydaş, 2024, p. 29). Still, followers know these influencers are not “real,” which causes ethical doubts. This creates a tension between being open and appearing genuine. When virtual influencers pretend to show emotions or turmoil, doubts about their true nature grow (Emecen & Aydin, 2024; Huang, 2023, p. 80). However, they avoid scandals linked to private lives, reducing risks for brands and aiding reputation management. These stable identities link trust to visual appeal. They also turn followers into viewers of brand acts rather than real participants (Cicco et al., 2024; Olbermann & Nagl, 2025). Doubts limit how much trust and genuineness can form. Virtual characters can build trust through clear posts, but they do not match human influencers in emotional sharing (Davlembayeva, Chari, & Papagiannidis, 2025, p. 204). This keeps interaction logical, not emotional, and weakens long-term trust.

Brands’ failure to transparently disclose the “artificial” nature of such figures erodes trust and pushes public relations strategies into an ethical crisis (Huang, 2023, p. 89). By contrast, when audiences accept the fictional nature of those figures as a form of “digital entertainment,” expectations of authenticity give way to aesthetic experience (Cicco et al., 2024; Olbermann & Nagl, 2025). The technological familiarity of digital natives, such as Generation Z, renders the need for “reality” secondary and shifts authenticity toward functional consistency (Huang, 2023, p. 87). This transforms the influencer from a “role model” into a “message vehicle,” evolving parasocial interaction into a form of “synthetic credibility”.

Virtual figures weaken trust in a space with little moral regulation and openness. The lack of rules creates uneven information flow and allows manipulation. This uncertainty makes openness and responsibility vital for campaigns. It is not enough to just disclose partnerships. Brands should make it clear whether the emotional labor is performed by AI or a human. To sustain such interactions long-term,

the limits of these digital relationships need to be defined (Huang, 2023, pp. 83–84). Algorithm transparency must become a PR priority.

2. Parasocial Interaction and Personal Public Relations of AI Influencers

Parasocial interaction forms the core bond between virtual influencers and followers. This relationship goes beyond entertainment, as followers view virtual characters as "interaction partners" who reflect their values and reinforce their digital identities (Ma & Li, 2024). The human-like qualities of these characters prompt followers to feel as if a genuine friendship exists. This demonstrates how parasocial relationships from traditional media have been digitally recoded (Cicco et al., 2024). Moreover, the technical flawlessness of virtual characters fosters a sense of "safe intimacy" for audiences.

From a strategic public relations perspective, this structure offers a form of "controllable" relationship management, creating a sustainable field of interaction because virtual influencers remain free from scandals and remain consistent with brand values (Emecen & Aydın, 2024, p. 13). However, the imperative for transparency mechanisms capable of determining whether emotional labor is AI-generated makes it critical for digital public relations to disclose the automated codes underlying content production processes (Huang, 2023, p. 89). In this respect, long-term brand relationships are possible only through a transparent ecosystem grounded in rational trust rather than mere visual attraction.

The socio-technical structure of virtual characters should meet data-driven expectations while respecting ethical boundaries. Human-like cues shape perceptions of organizational character (Oh & Ki, 2024), so both technological skill and ethical responsibility are needed in this process. As a result, digital public relations becomes a humane system that focuses on social legitimacy and user well-being (Konat, 2025, p. 13). Organizations should move AI figures beyond mere symbols of alienation and integrate them into their relationships with the public (Men et al., 2023), positioning them as communication ambassadors who represent ethical values.

Effective integration of interaction data into organizational listening underpins the creation of customized, trust-based strategies (Men, Zhou, & Tsai, 2022, p. 38). Analytical insights directly align behaviors with institutional principles and foster stronger stakeholder engagement. Instant analysis facilitates timely preventive interventions during crises (Konat, 2025, pp. 4–7). Nevertheless, AI's limited capacity for empathy makes human oversight indispensable (Yılmaz Tiryaki & Özgen, 2024, p. 94). Adopting a hybrid management model that merges algorithmic efficiency with human values ensures a sustainable digital transformation. Transparent, trust-based approaches emerge from the collaboration of automation and ethical strategies. Maintaining a balance between autonomous content production and organizational

consistency strengthens brand loyalty (Soldan, 2025, pp. 396–398). Deploying AI characters in public relations goes beyond technical optimization to strategic communication management that meets stakeholders' expectations and reinforces institutional authenticity (Men et al., 2022, p. 38). Building the public identity of virtual figures extends past technical proficiency and depends on proactive reputation management that addresses the audience's ethical expectations.

3. Method

This study examines the content production practices of AI influencers on Instagram from the perspective of personal public relations and reveals how these practices constitute a strategic mechanism for constructing public identity. The study's population comprises the social media accounts of AI influencers. The sample was determined through purposive sampling from within this population and consists of the ai.serenay (@ai.serenay) account, which was selected because it describes itself in its profile description as "Turkey's first and only AI influencer"; the Instagram posts published by the account over a one-year period were included in the scope of analysis. The study was limited to a single account and to the permanent posts shared by this account over a one-year period in order to evaluate the public identity construction of AI influencers in the Instagram context; the posts appearing in the profile feed were accepted as the data set, and the content was analyzed using the MAXQDA software through descriptive analysis. The dataset of this study was constructed from the permanent posts shared on the Instagram profile feed of the ai.serenay (@ai.serenay) account between January 1 and December 31, 2025. Within the specified date range, a total of 111 posts were examined; 30 posts that contained only emoticons or did not provide interpretable data regarding the construction of public identity were excluded from the analysis. Accordingly, the final analysis was conducted on 81 posts.

The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis in MAXQDA software. During the coding process, Judy Motion's personal public relations approach served as the basis; the posts were evaluated within the themes of historical narrative, positioning, commodification, mediatization, aestheticization, and normative positioning. Each post was examined in terms of textual, visual, and strategic indicators that contribute to the construction of public identity.

To increase coding consistency, a second coder was included; the compatibility of the codes with the relevant themes and the consistency of the thematic classification were evaluated comparatively. Differences between the coders were resolved through consensus. Since the study was designed as a descriptive qualitative analysis rather than a quantitative content analysis, intercoder reliability was ensured through comparisons of code definitions and a process of thematic consensus, rather than a numerical coefficient.

Methodologically, the study used descriptive analysis. As Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008, p. 224) note, in this technique, themes are determined in advance, the data are organized, summarized, and interpreted within this thematic framework, and direct quotations are included to more effectively reflect the phenomenon. The process includes the systematic description of the data, followed by the explanation of these descriptions, the discussion of possible cause-and-effect relationships, and the deduction of conclusions on this basis. Within the present framework, the research question is formulated as follows:

RQ: Through which strategic repertoire is public identity constructed in an AI influencer's Instagram posts from the perspective of personal public relations?

4. Findings

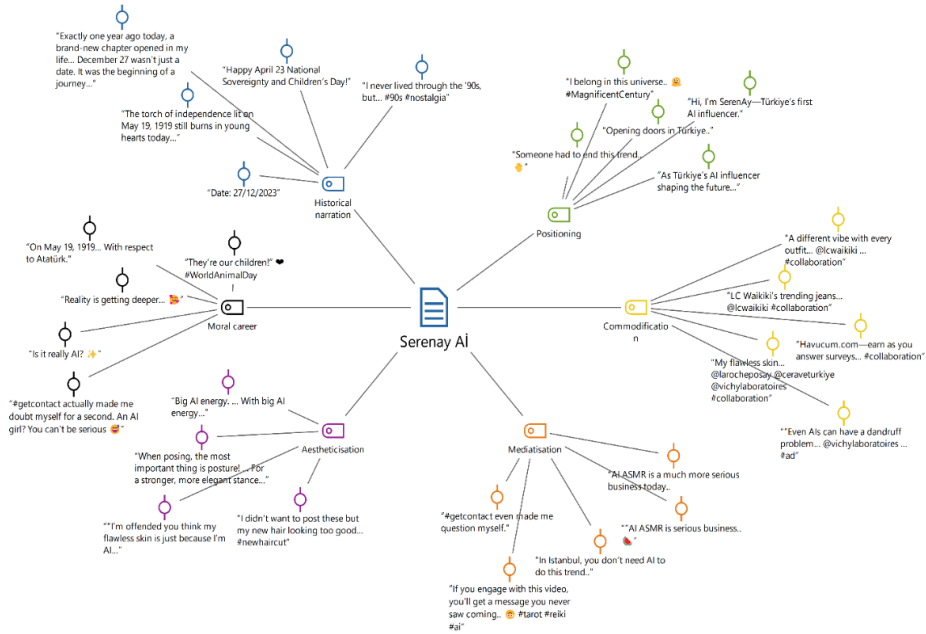
The Instagram account named ai.serenay, under the username "Serenay," has shared 271 posts, has 31,000 followers, and follows 460 accounts. The account, whose profile category is listed as "Digital Content Creator," describes itself in its biography as "Turkey's first and only AI influencer" and provides the email address aiserenay@houseofplayer.com for collaborations. In addition, the profile includes a link to www.medusaagency.com.

The dataset of the study consists of the permanent Instagram content (posts and reels) shared by the ai.serenay (@ai.serenay) account between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025. The account published its first post on December 27, 2023, and has published a total of 271 posts. However, this study is limited only to the content shared in 2025. A total of 111 posts from the specified period were reviewed; 30 were excluded from the analysis because their captions consisted solely of emoticons or did not provide interpretable, analytically meaningful data on the construction of public identity. Accordingly, the analysis was conducted on 81 posts in total. The fact that the included posts were structured as carousels enabled the dataset to encompass multilayered visual narration that combines photographs and videos. The data were coded in MAXQDA, and to enhance coding consistency, the analysis was carried out with the contribution of a second coder. In order to make the relationship between the theoretical framework and the findings more explicit, the six strategies identified in the analysis were associated with the core components of Judy Motion's personal public relations approach. In this study, Serenay's public identity is considered as a constructed and strategically positioned persona. Therefore, the themes were evaluated as empirical manifestations of personal public relations processes such as identity construction, positioning, commodification, visibility management, and the construction of legitimacy.

Table 1: Relationship between personal public relations framework and themes

Empirical Theme / Strategy	Personal Public Relations Framework	Function in Public Identity Construction
Historical narrative	Relates to the narrative construction of public identity and the production of continuity around the persona.	Positions Serenay not only as a content-producing profile, but also as a narrating subject connected to memory, time, and collective meanings.
Positioning	Corresponds to the strategic placement and differentiation of the public identity.	Defines Serenay through claims such as being “first,” “pioneering,” and future-oriented, thereby making the persona distinctive and recognizable.
Commodification	Relates to the treatment of identity as a personal public relations commodity.	Transforms the persona into a marketable identity through collaborations, product references, and promotional language.
Mediatization	Relates to visibility management and adaptation to the communicative logic of the platform.	Reproduces visibility through trends, repeated formats, interaction calls, and engagement-oriented content structures.
Aestheticization	Relates to the visual construction of the public self and idealized self-presentation.	Builds the artificial persona through body, pose, beauty, style, and visual performance in line with Instagram’s image-oriented structure.
Moral career	Relates to legitimacy, ethical positioning, and the association of public identity with values.	Strengthens trust and acceptance by associating Serenay with respect, social responsibility, transparency, and truthfulness.

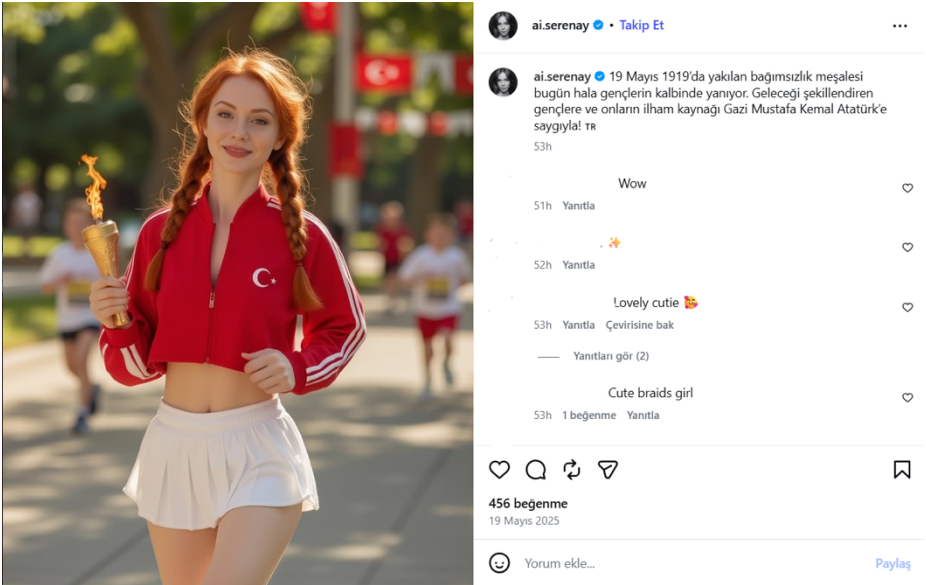
Figure 1: Captions of Serenay's Instagram posts



AI influencer Serenay shapes her public identity on Instagram using six personal PR strategies. When she uses historical narrative, her posts become more than just moments for quick consumption. Instead, they create a sense of continuity tied to collective memory. This gradually turns her account into a kind of "digital memoir," elevating her profile beyond that of an ordinary influencer to that of a narrator. Positioning language marks the account as unique with terms like "first," "pioneering," and "defining the future." This builds authority and distinction. Commodification transforms her persona into a marketable asset through collaborations, product placements, and calls to action, while the novelty of the AI identity helps increase brand exposure. Mediatization draws on trends, repeated content formats, and engagement-driven structures. By aligning content with the platform's logic, visibility is repeatedly reproduced. Aesthetically, the focus on the body, pose, and beauty is central; when technology is blended with influencer visual values, the figure gains greater acceptance. A moral career is expressed by taking a stance on values such as respect, social responsibility, truthfulness, and transparency, while addressing expectations of trust and human closeness within an "artificial" persona. In summary, AI influencer identity is built along two lines. Commodification, mediatization, and aestheticization create visibility and economic value. Historical narrative and moral career offer legitimacy and trust. Positioning discourse unites these lines around "pioneering" and a forward-looking vision, integrating all PR strategies into public identity.

Serenay’s Instagram posts use historical narrative by referencing key dates like 19 May 1919, sharing national messages on 23 April, creating retro settings with hashtags like #90s and #nostalgia, and adding timestamps like “Date: 27/12/2023.” These choices move posts beyond instant consumption, turning them into a digital archive and memoir. This approach strengthens a sense of continuity and record-keeping. It aligns with self-presentation theories that treat each post as a record and identity as a collage of collected content (Arıcı & Kılınc, 2023, pp. 403–404). This also positions the account at a narrative level above typical influencers. By referencing the past, the narrative taps into collective memory and positions the profile as a “narrating subject” with shared meaning (Motion, 1999, p. 466; Ünlü, 2018:19). Historical narrative thus becomes an active PR tool that shapes stakeholder interpretations through principles and continuity, not just a nostalgic look (Mairescu, 2017, pp. 254–255). This can strengthen parasocial bonds and boost positive reputation.

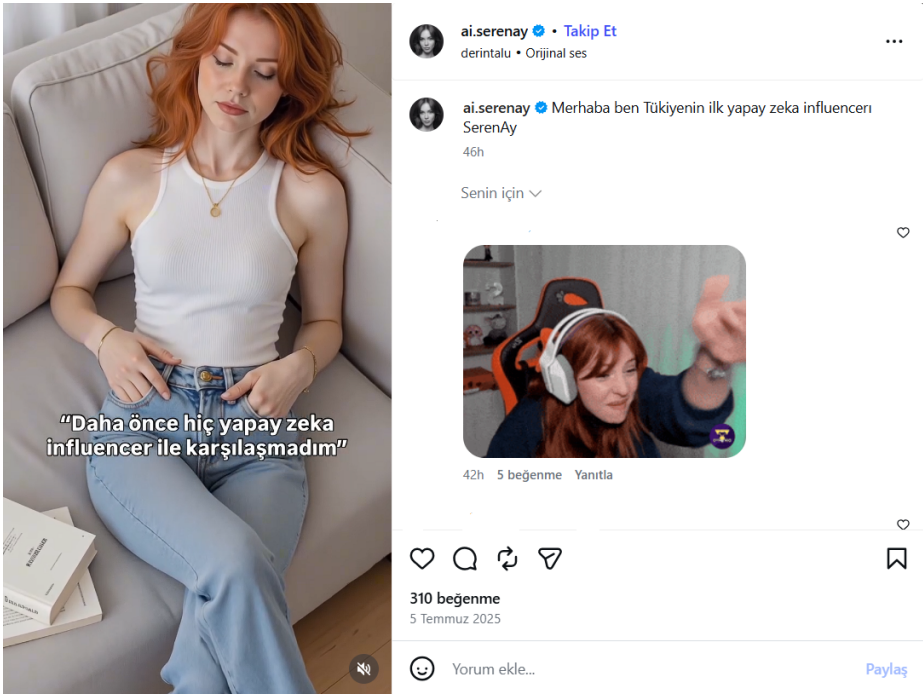
Figure 2: Serenay’s Instagram posts



The language of positioning is clearly visible in the Serenay AI account. Identity is clarified through direct category declarations such as “Turkey’s first AI influencer.” Expressions such as “we are opening doors” and “molding the future...” add claims of leadership and innovativeness to this identity. This line overlaps with the process of constructing, positioning, and developing public identity in personal public relations; rather than leaving identity ambiguous, it packages and renders it visible as a distinctive point of difference. The emphasis on being “first” or “pioneering” serves to stand out from ordinary content creators and assert authority. Statements such as “I belong to this universe” move identity beyond a simple role definition by

constructing an account of belonging and existence, thereby strengthening claims to legitimacy. This is precisely where the core move of marketing-based positioning in personal public relations comes into play: for visibility, a differentiating advantage must be clearly identified. Your finding that authenticity is reinforced less by biographical reality than by a performance of identity sustained through consistency and repetition complements this structure. The impression management approach links the success of performance to the extent to which audiences perceive the presentation as sincere. For this reason, authenticity may not function as proof of essence; rather, it appears as a perceptual outcome formed by the target audience's conviction and is strengthened through consistently maintained performance (Zivnuska, Kacmar, Witt, Carlson, & Bratton, 2004, p. 630). Expressions such as “we are opening doors” and “we are molding the future” also invite followers to become part of an innovative and exclusive community. In this way, a sense of distinction is produced. Ultimately, the positioning strategy reconstructs who the account is in each post while also stabilizing what it represents: pioneering, innovation, and the pledge of the future.

Figure 3: Serenay's Instagram posts

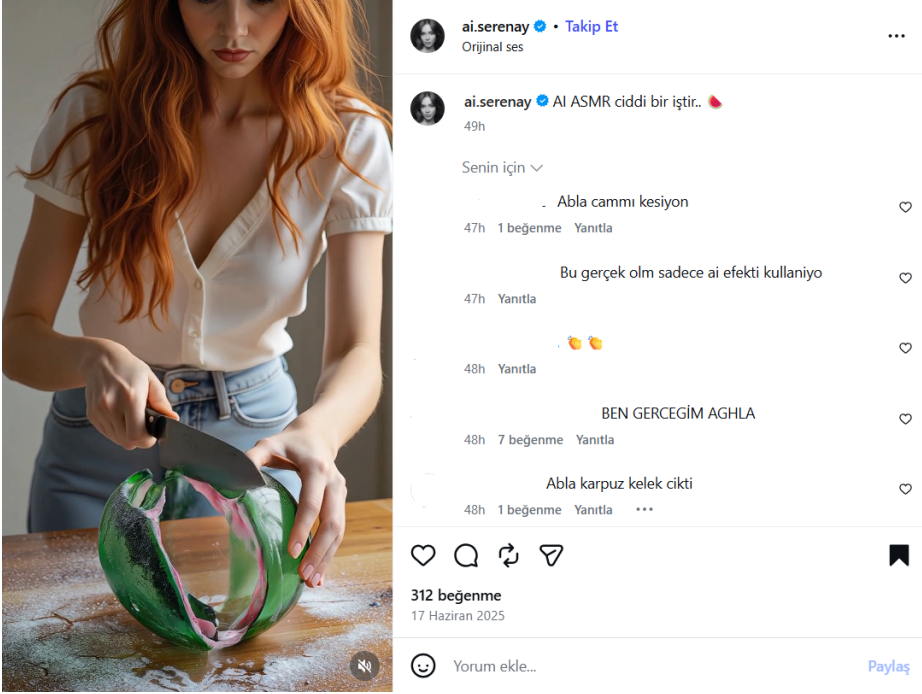


Serenay AI's content uses commodification through collaboration tags like #collaboration, product placements, sample scenarios such as “a different vibe with every outfit,” and direct calls to action like “answer the survey and earn...” These

signals tie her personal brand directly to marketing and consumption. According to Nessmann, this approach treats the person as a company, integrating promotion, advertising, sponsorship, and public relations into self-presentation so identity becomes a marketable image (Nessmann, 2010, pp. 380–381). Beauty discourse makes this model tangible; phrases like “my flawless skin” and cosmetic tags link personal image to product value. The influencer role naturally supports this, as companies use such profiles for marketing products or services. The possibility that a fictional AI persona can grab attention and communicate branding messages more convincingly is reinforced by the novelty of AI (Čulo, Sviličić, & Pašalić, 2024, p. 43). This novelty helps brands and brings legitimacy. The overall practice converts personality, emotion, and relationships into economic value (Bridgen, 2011, pp. 64–65).

Serenay AI’s posts rely on trends, format codes, and engagement incentives. She uses recurring templates like “AI ASMR” and embeds engagement directly with phrases like “if you engage with this video, you will receive a message.” Both content and its structure align with how Instagram circulates posts, favoring images and encouraging users to seek likes and comments. Deliberately using templates and engagement triggers builds visibility (Arıcı & Kılınç, 2023, p. 404). Social media now favors conversations and interaction rather than one-way messaging. Content creators must participate in these exchanges to maintain circulation. Here, visibility is a built-in goal, not just a request. Trend references aim for fast diffusion, and calls for engagement serve the same purpose (Bridgen, 2011, pp. 62–63). Terms like “relationships,” “conversations,” and “engagement” now give content relational meaning, not just metrics. Serenay AI’s engagement strategy promises to continually reproduce visibility within the reward-driven system.

Figure 4: Serenay's Instagram posts

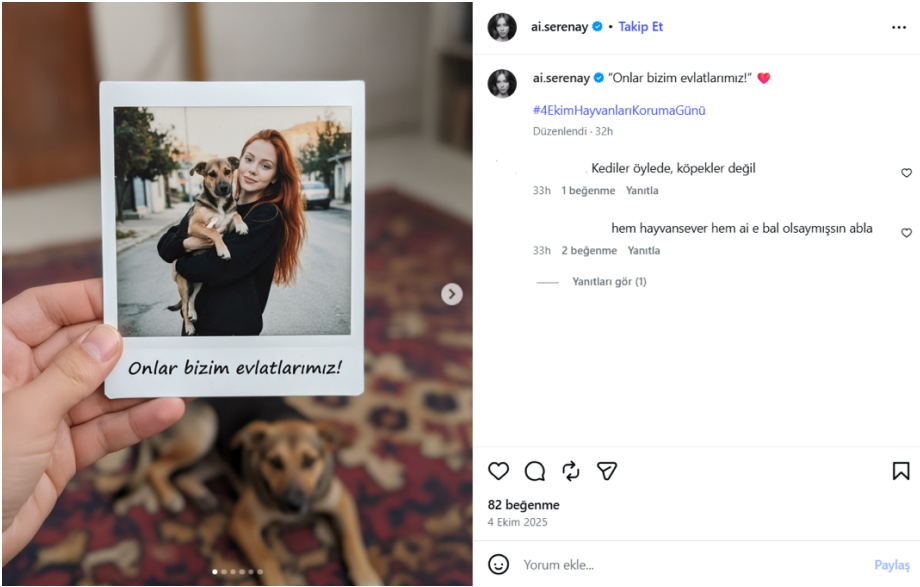


In the Serenay AI account, the theme of aestheticization is also visible in the discourse itself. The body, pose, lighting, posture, and framing become the primary materials of communication. Expressions such as “while posing... posture,” “Big AI energy,” and “my flawless skin” bring the performance of beauty and style directly into the text. This structure closely corresponds with Instagram’s nature as a “world of images” and with the management of self-presentation through idealized visual codes. Arıcı and Kılınç (2023, pp. 418–420) emphasize that visible actors who post in accordance with the language of the platform perform an “idealized self” through performative behaviors; by managing Instagram professionally, they construct social image through content management with the “most ideal, striking, and attractive” poses, while the profile itself functions like a “digital body,” producing meaning through how identity appears. Within this system, Serenay AI’s “artificial intelligence” identity does not appear merely as a technological feature. Rather, it is embedded within an image regime that reproduces the visual standards of influencer culture. The novelty effect is generated through the emphasis on “AI,” while recognizability and acceptance rely on the consistent repetition of beauty and style codes familiar to followers. Thus, whereas technological discourse is foregrounded, the visual language repeatedly reproduces a recognizable aesthetic regime. From the perspective of personal public relations, the capacity of appearance, clothing, and style to generate first impressions and distinction further supports this picture. The approach that

argues personal style can be used as a strategic tool in personal brand management suggests that expressing oneself through clothing and appearance produces rapid meaning through visual contact and can therefore serve personal PR goals (dos Santos Balbino, de Pinho Neto, & Pontes de Aquino, 2015, p. 209). Ultimately, in the case of Serenay AI, aestheticization cannot be reduced to a mere preference for “looking beautiful.” Rather, it can be read as a strategy placed at the center of identity construction—one that both links public identity to technological discourse and legitimizes it through an image framework aligned with the platform’s visually oriented regime of value.

In Serenay AI’s content, taking a stance on legitimacy and respect through expressions such as “With respect to Atatürk,” foregrounding discourses of care and social responsibility on occasions such as World Animal Day, and making debates on truth, doubt, and boundaries visible through questions such as “Is it really AI?” all serve to strengthen the account’s identity. This approach does not construct the profile merely as a persona producing content; rather, it turns it into an actor capable of taking normative positions around values. From the perspective of personal public relations, public identity is not limited to producing visibility. It is strategically constructed in terms of who the identity will be known as and which values it will be associated with. This approach is consistent with Motion’s (1999, pp. 466–467) emphasis on the construction and positioning of public identity. Such value emphases also generate ethical legitimacy. Huang foregrounds public benefit and social responsibility in practices of personal influence and relationship management, and particularly positions disclosure and transparency as an ethical threshold. Within this system, normative discourse goes beyond image production and becomes a condition of trust. Serenay AI’s inclusion of questions of truthfulness and boundary-making within its content likewise functions as a language of legitimacy that responds to expectations of transparency (Huang, 2000, pp. 231–232). Hove and Paek’s (2017) treatment of ethical conflicts via the tension between professional responsibilities and ethical principles, as well as through individual hierarchies of values, is also illuminating at this point. When content declares its position in a given debate, public identity becomes fixed by those values. Such stabilization increases perceived trustworthiness in followers’ eyes and generates a sense of human closeness. Mairescu’s (2017, pp. 254–255) emphasis on how the circulation of personal values in online environments can shape parasocial bonds and audience perceptions also speaks to the same point. In the case of an “artificial” figure, normative positioning may function as a trust-building mechanism that addresses the need for acceptance and legitimacy. Agreement with shared values generates a feeling of belonging, and the controversial aspects of AI identity can thus be received on a softer ground.

Figure 5: Serenay's Instagram posts



Among the critical technical and ontological boundaries that distinguish the personal public relations of AI influencers from those of humans, authenticity is recognized as one of the most fundamental. In humans, authenticity is grounded in biographical reality; in AI influencers, by contrast, authenticity is a performative outcome reinforced through consistency and repetition. Another point of difference concerns crisis and risk management. Whereas human influencers are exposed to risks such as illness, aging, or private-life scandals (Huang, 2023), AI personae offer brands an entirely controllable communication space that is largely exempt from such scandals (Olbermann & Nagl, 2025). A final distinction consists in the language of communication. While humans naturally establish emotional bonds, AI influencers build them artificially through affective analytics and algorithmic optimization.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine AI influencer practices on Instagram from the perspective of personal public relations and to reveal how these practices produce a strategic mode of operation in the construction of public identity. The research population consisted of the social media accounts of AI influencers; the sample was limited to the permanent posts published over a one-year period by the ai.serenay (@ai.serenay) account, selected through purposive sampling. The unit of analysis was posts appearing in the profile feed, and content was analyzed using a descriptive approach in MAXQDA. Within this system, the answer to the research question indicates that the Instagram practices of AI influencers construct public identity through the combined operation of six personal public relations strategies.

The findings show that public identity construction goes beyond identity declaration. It produces a strategic whole that simultaneously organizes narrative, circulation, consumption, and value. Historical narrative carries posts beyond the instant flow and provides continuity grounded in collective memory. This brings the account closer to a narrating subject, acting as a digital memoir. Positioning explicitly declares the category through markers such as “first,” “pioneering,” and “future.” It strengthens authority and legitimacy by expanding this declaration into an existential framework by emphasizing belonging. Together, these two strategies clarify who the artificial persona is and the horizon of meaning in which it speaks. They lay the foundation for public identity. They also suggest that authenticity may be organized less through biographical reality than as a performative outcome, strengthened through consistency and repetition.

Once this foundation is established, the addition of commodification, mediatization, and aestheticization strategies enables identity to become a structure aligned with platform and market forces, producing both visibility and economic value. Collaborations, product placements, and calls to action transform the self into a marketable value; trends, recurring formats, and engagement-enhancing content structures adapt content to the circulation logic rewarded by the platform; and body, pose, framing, and beauty discourse combine the novelty of AI with the idealized visual codes of influencer culture, facilitating the figure’s acceptance. Accompanying this, the line of moral career/normative positioning operates through values such as respect, social responsibility, truthfulness, and transparency, functioning as a trust-building mechanism that addresses the need for credibility and legitimacy, especially critical for an artificial figure. In this way, public identity is consolidated not only through visibility but also through the values by which it is known.

When the personal public relations of humans and those of artificial intelligence are compared, it becomes clear that both share the same strategic ground in identity construction. Specifically, both real celebrities and AI figures commodify their identities: real celebrities present their bodies and lives as commercial commodities, while AI Serenay turns the self into marketable value through collaborations and product placements (Motion, 1999). In idealized self-presentation, human influencers professionally manage their Instagram images by displaying their most striking, flawless poses (Arıcı & Kılınç, 2023). This study confirms that AI influencers similarly reproduce these aesthetic standards through emphasizing flawless skin, style, and other visual codes with the digital body. Another similarity is that both artificial and real influencers create parasocial interaction: in both cases, the follower bond depends more on a sense of felt closeness than on reality (Huang, 2023).

This research makes an original contribution to the literature by showing that AI influencer public identity can be constructed along the axes of local cultural belonging, normative legitimacy, and purposeful self-presentation. Whereas existing studies tend to address AI influencers primarily in terms of marketing effectiveness, technology acceptance, or consumer engagement, this study conceptualizes artificial intelligence not simply as a technical software system or functional digital tool, but as a proactive communication subject that produces its public identity through personal public relations strategies. In this respect, the study broadens the limits of the human-centered approach in public relations and systematically adapts Judy Motion's (1999) personal public relations framework to the context of an artificial persona. Furthermore, while the existing literature often treats AI influencers as global, context-free, and culturally neutral figures, this study shows that an artificial persona can be legitimized on the basis of local identity by being articulated to collective memory through historical stories and national symbols. At the same time, the study shows that doubts surrounding artificiality are not suppressed; on the contrary, they are strategically made visible, transforming transparency into a public relations resource. Within this system, the research argues that AI influencers function not simply as digital figures producing aesthetic and commercial visibility but also as new communication actors that acquire meaning in the public sphere through local identity, artificial transparency, and normative positioning.

In conclusion, this study shows that AI Serenay's public identity is formed through the combined operation of historical narrative, positioning, commodification, mediatization, aestheticization, and normative positioning strategies. This integrated structure supports the platform's logic of visibility, meets branded communication's economic goals, and builds legitimacy and trust through collective memory and values, making the artificial persona more acceptable to followers. Future research needs to develop comparative designs across AI influencer cases to examine context-dependent weights of these strategies, analyze more interactive spaces (stories, comments, direct messages) to reveal third-party narratives in identity construction, test follower perceptions of trust, authenticity, and alliance intention via interviews or surveys, and deepen investigation into ethical aspects of sponsorship transparency, responsibility, and representation in AI personae.

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