

Empowerment in the Age of Personal Branding

89- 01/06/2025 In a world saturated with images and narratives, personal branding is emerging as the ultimate vehicle for empowerment. Personal branding gives people the opportunity to express themselves, share their stories and assert themselves in the public arena. Researcher Siranush Ghaltakhchyan sees this media showcase as a contemporary form of self-exposure, shaped by digital culture and market logic. The author takes as an example Michelle Obama's posts on Facebook, Instagram and X, which attest to a remarkable mastery of personal narrative: *"Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It's something you have to own."* The study also highlights the limits of such digital communication, based on marketing codes and its injunctions which place the burden of empowerment solely on individuals.

Personal branding enables individuals to assert their values, gain visibility, legitimacy, and agency. It is a powerful tool for self-determination: *"If you don't get out there and define yourself, you'll be quickly and inaccurately defined by others,"* warns Michelle Obama. By using rhetorical and semiotic tools, personal branding transforms subjectivity into symbolic capital. Building a coherent and intentional image and crafting impactful messages are strategies that enhance one's influence and capacity to act.

However, this pursuit of effectiveness raises critical questions. The attention given to narrative coherence, message targeting, and visual impact also reveals a form of self-commodification. Everyone simultaneously becomes the subject and object of their own communication. Even when skilfully deployed, these strategies call into question the authenticity of the discourse: telling your story publicly means accepting to format it. To succeed, a personal brand must respond to the

digital framework and meets market expectations—be readable, desirable, and sufficiently liked. This implies defining editorial choices in order to maximize the effect of each post, at the risk of privileging style over substance, form rather than content.

Moreover, Michelle Obama's call to action—*"Be focused, be determined, be hopeful, be empowered"*—is based on personal commitment, making empowerment a uniquely individual responsibility. Yet emancipation is also a political process. It can be hindered by structural inequalities, unfavorable socio-economic environments, or restrictive cultural norms.

Thus, individual empowerment through personal branding represents only one step. To be truly transformative, this personal effort must be connected to a collective dynamic. Linking individual stories to a shared narrative, building solidarity, imagining alternatives, and fueling a broader movement: this is how empowerment can move beyond market logics and become genuinely political and emancipatory.

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Ghaltakhchyan, S. (2025). PERSONAL BRANDING: SHAPING AND MAINTAINING A SUCCESSFUL PERSONAL BRAND. *Armenian Folia Anglistika*, 21(1 (31)), 125-142.

[Armenian Folia Anglistika](#)

Michelle Obama maintains a strong social media presence:

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/michelleobama>, 57,1 M followers

X <https://x.com/MichelleObama> 21.5M Followers

Facebook https://www.facebook.com/michelleobama/?locale=fr_FR 19 M followers

In March 2025, she launched IMO, a podcast hosted with her brother, Craig Robinson <https://www.instagram.com/imopodcasts/> 252 k abonnés