BEYOND GENZ



IS THE MEDIA FUELLING AGEIST STEREOTYPES?

HOPEFUL MONSTERS.



WELCOME TO

CHANGE THINGS LAB

Introducing **Hopeful Monsters'** cultural intelligence and research unit uncovering the unexpected truths that shape the way we live.

Through *Change Things Lab*, we combine immersive ethnographic techniques, interviews with *'cultural informants'* and cutting edge technology to identify and predict real trends, happening right now in culture.

This April, we'll be exploring media's role in fuelling ageist stereotypes: *Is Marketing Ageist?*









Alright, folks — let's talk about something we all know but might not want to admit: *marketing is ageist*. Yep, we said it. Here's the thing — there's a *massive*, *untapped market* right under our noses. Brands are out here chasing the ever-elusive Gen Z, but they're missing the boat on older Aussies ready to spend, engage with brands, and live life to the fullest.

Older generations have more disposable income and brand loyalty than any other demographic...



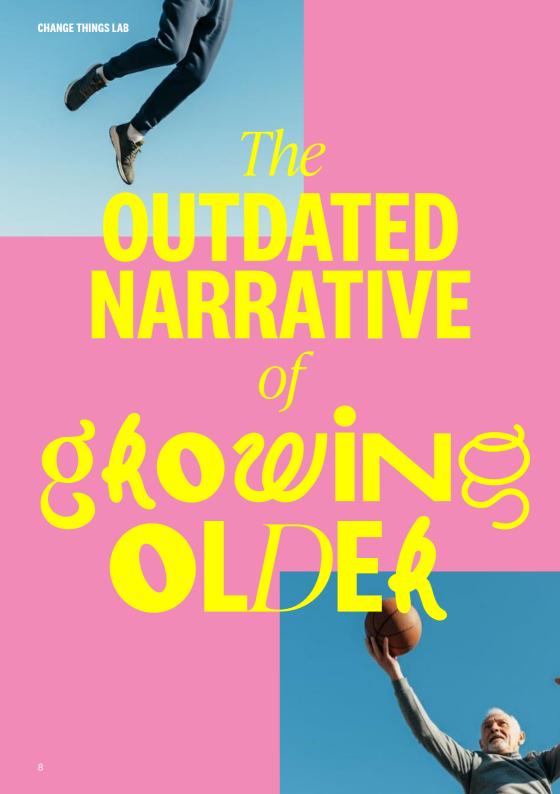
In fact, research from RMIT shows that older generations have more disposable income and brand loyalty than any other demographic, yet they remain largely ignored in marketing strategies. But instead of cashing in on this opportunity, brands are too busy clinging to outdated, ageist stereotypes.

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One of the causes of ageing anxiety is ageism. Ageism is a by-product of a society that fears ageing.

COSTA, F. (2024)

Taylor & Francis Online



This isn't just a small problem; it's a tension brewing for decades. In a series of interviews one 69-year-old man told us his story. When he was younger, he "used to joke when you'd see old people at the end of the aisle at the supermarket, complaining and moaning about their issues."

Funny, right? But it's a perfect example of how our view of growing older is warped. The truth is that the media loves a stereotype. And one of its favourites? Older adults. From the grumpy grandparent to the frail pensioner, people in the later stages of life are often boxed into tired, outdated narratives.

THE HARMFUL PORTRAYAL OF GROWING J OLDER

The media's portrayal of people as they grow older isn't just wrong – it's flat-out harmful. These stereotypes have seeped into our collective consciousness, creating a skewed view of growing older, and it's affecting the way society, especially younger generations, view and treat those who are growing older.

We spoke to a 72-year-old woman who got jumped in the queue at the supermarket by a young person telling her to hurry up, calling her a "boomer." Harsh, right? But that wasn't the only time. She recalled how a young worker once greeted her with a "Now, my dear" – you can almost hear the condescension. She's had to correct people repeatedly, saying,

<u>I'm 72, not 102!</u>

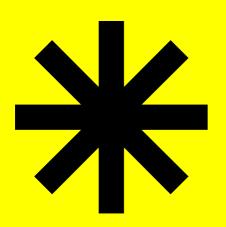
As she put it: "I wrestle with getting older and being portrayed at my age as being washed up. I'm considered an 'elderly person,' but I don't feel old. At times, I feel like a shag on a rock, being stigmatised constantly."



BEIMES ations

This divide, this tension, it's all over the media. And they're pouring gasoline on the fire with every shallow portrayal of growing older. The rise of trends like #SephoraKids, FOGO (Fear of Getting Old), and anti-ageing skincare routines are part of a much bigger cultural shift that makes growing older something to be feared and avoided at all costs.

...because there's also these ideas of like staying 'hip' and that you're more valuable when you're younger.



As the 69-year-old man we spoke to said; "Ageing is frequently depicted as a problem that needs to be resisted, slowed, or disguised." But to get the whole picture, we took to the streets to hear what Gen Z had to say. One young Aussie shared; "People have like *death anxiety*, or people are anxious about ageing because there's also these ideas of like staying 'hip' and that you're more valuable when you're younger."

But he didn't stop there. He added: "I think the algorithm within social media is kind of the engine that drives disparity in views and stigmas amongst generations."



We live in a world obsessed with anti-ageing, yet here's the irony: we're all growing older. Society's obsession with youth has created a paradoxical prejudice—we're all discriminating against ourselves.





THE REALITY?

PEOPLE ARE THATIST





A 75 year-old woman put growing older in perspective: "It's not a death sentence." What's more, they're thriving. They're enjoying life in ways that defy ageist norms. We asked a group to journal their lived experiences of growing older for a week. And what did we learn?

Well, they aren't sitting around knitting in rocking chairs. Nope. One Aussie's idea of fun? Skydiving. Another? Dining out at the hottest new restaurant. And the third? Making TikTok videos — yes, you read that right. They live dynamic, active lives that the media isn't showing you. As one 70-year-old man said, "You know you can have a great life. You don't have to be 20."

BREAKING THESTER*****OTYPES

So, why does the media still push the idea that people in later stages of life are "out of touch" when, in reality, they're living their best lives? The media is stuck in a perpetual loop of outdated representations. But here's the truth: these stereotypes couldn't be further from the reality.

One 70-year-old man summed it up well when he said; "The trouble is that the media presents us as old and frail," adding, "The media paints most older people as sedentary – and I'm not." The 72-year-old woman echoed the sentiment: "There's more to a person than just wrinkles and no teeth... you've got to *change people's mindset*. And that's where the media and brands are stuck."

DEATH SENTENCE.







Im old, not stupid,

And that mindset shift can't come soon enough – because *Australia is growing older, and fast.* Whether we like it or not, we've got some tough conversations ahead about how to support an ageing population (spoiler: ignoring them isn't a strategy).

To prove that ignoring older generations is a *dead-end strategy*, we caught up with Hannah Rayment from Lifeblood, who told us "the proportion of older people in Australia is expected to *increase significantly* in the coming years due to life expectancy and declining fertility rates."

She goes on to share that this shift presents a *huge opportunity* to tap into the older generation. For Lifeblood, it means "offering older individuals a sense of ongoing health, purpose and social connection" by creating fulfilling and impactful experiences that open many doors for meaningful engagement.



RATIVE



coming years due to life expectancy and declining fertility rates.

HANNAH RAYMENT (2025)

Brands and the media have a powerful opportunity to help lead this change, redefining what it means to grow older in a way that *empowers* rather than diminishes. It's time for a new narrative that celebrates growing older — not as something to fear, but as something to aspire to.

And speaking of aspiration, here's the plot twist: while Gen Z is busy freezing time to stay young, they're also low-key obsessed with the kind of confidence that comes with growing older—just look at the rise of trends like coastal grandmother, old money style, and grandpa-core. It's not just about aesthetics; it's a vibe.



BRANDS CAN STEP **IN TO CHALLENGE** THESE NORMS AND GIVE A VOICE TO OLDER PEOPLE, CREATING AN **INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY** TO STAND OUT AND ENGAGE NEW AUDIENCES - BY Rewriting THE NARRATIVE AND CELEBRATING AGEING AS POWERFUL, POSITIVE, AND LIBERATING.



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The opportunity for brands here is huge. So, what can they do? According to the Aussies we spoke to, it's simple: *embrace individuality*, *diversity*, and *authenticity*. Tell stories that show ageing for what it is.

Take a page out of the **Campaign for Real Beauty** playbook. That campaign tore down the narrow beauty standards that kept women trapped in one version of what was "beautiful."

Now, brands have the chance to do the same for ageing. We're already starting to see glimpses of this in films like Nicole Kidman's Babygirl, which tackles the discomfort around age-gap relationships.

The media's portrayal of growing older is ageist. No doubt about it. So, what's your move? The time to redefine growing older is now — and the silver economy is waiting.







OUR TEAM IN THE CHANGE THINGS LAB ARE WAITING BY THE PHONE FOR YOUR CALL! *

*Phone line being installed, better just email us instead. hello@hopefulmonsters.com.au HOPEFUL MONSTERS.