

Jani Baker ([00:00](#)):

Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for your patience this morning. Thank you very much for coming for coming to the Adelaide Festival of Ideas session today on the images of aging. I'm Jani Baker, I'm the general manager of customer innovation and brand at ACH group today's session brings together leaders in fashion and styling, film and advertising to discuss the topics of images of aging. We're very keen to further explore how the images of aging make us feel about ourselves and others, whether we're telling the aging narrative well, or whether we're simply ignoring it. ICH group was particularly keen to further this discussion on this topic, given our interest in the way that older people are viewed and therefore treated by our society, helping us explore the images of aging theme are our panel members, Gabrielle Lee. Anello just right here. Welcome Gabby who heads up little lion PR, which is a big boutique agency specializing in luxury lifestyle and community brands, Courtney Gibson in the middle.

Jani Baker ([01:07](#)):

Who's the relatively newly appointed CEO of the south Australian film Corp welcome Courtney and James Ricard, who has generously agreed to join us this morning at short notice, who is an advertising writer and creative director. We're also joined by Jeff Phoebe. Who's sitting down here in the front row to view this topic from a different perspective. So whilst the Adelaide festival of ideas, founder and chairman, Greg Mackey might refer to himself as an aging provocateur. Jeff Phoebe is the original holder of dismantle. Jeff's the general manager of strategy and partnerships at ACH group. He's been working in the aging sector now for many years, making contributions that both the state national and international level, his strong views about how older people are presented in the media and beyond he is going to share with us today. So to kick off, we'll hear from Jeff. And then I'll ask each of the panel members a question which they'll have three minutes or so to respond to. Then we'll have a general discussion. I'd now like to invite Jeff [inaudible] to say a few words,

Jeff Phoebe ([02:13](#)):

That different perspective, I guess, is that I'm living the experience rather than the panel members who all seem to be that generation one below. And I guess that's been something that I've been conscious of since I started working in aging when I was about 25. And that's involved a sort of policy level, both in Canberra state level and some international work and whatever. One of the things that struck me over that whole time is that it's young people who actually get to make policy. You actually get to decide what it is will be the mores of the time what it will be to actually dictate what the are and that we have a series of aging policies in Australia who are very much made up by 25 to 40 year olds. And they don't actually understand the lift experience.

Jeff Phoebe ([03:13](#)):

They don't understand that. Recently I had a a a bout with a hospital where I had to go in for a few weeks with an infection I had, must've had about half a dozen people coming in and going through an assessment process with me. What your name, what's your date of birth? What's wrong with you? What's your diet like what's your social situation like how many friends do you have and a series of pejorative questions that in a sense framed for them who I was, but it did not frame for me who I was. And okay. And and that whole notion of other people deciding who you are is one of the major themes that really affects you as you, as you become older. Now, I wouldn't say I'm old. I wouldn't say I'm not old.

Jeff Phoebe ([04:15](#)):

I just am. And that's like, we all, are. We just, we just are no matter where we are. And so therefore the sorts of things we look for in life are the things that have been a manifestation of the life we've lived to date the life we're currently living and the life that we want to live. And all of those things ought to be positive. We ought to think about them as the ways in which all those things around us can make life much more positive. I'm sure if Steve Irwin were still alive, he'd just want to live his life and get on and go out there and do some more fishing with sharks and other sorts of things. We're the same. I mean, we just want to live the life that we've created for ourselves. And the things that advertising agencies, clothing agencies, furniture agencies, ought to be doing is talking to us about the sort of design that we want and the sort of things we want to want to see in place.

Jeff Phoebe ([05:19](#)):

There's just a lack of that. It's a bit the same way that the way in which our politicians develop aging policy and develop social security policy they don't talk to you about what it is that fix you and how it affects you and therefore what they need to put in place to actually make policies much more relevant the same way as design, as clothing, as furniture as whatever it is, all the things we come across in everyday life. The design of our cities, the design of our transport, all ought to reflect the fact that they're for the older population, as well as the middle aged population is one of the younger population. The big issue is it's just the younger population that gets to design it and designed it around their pecs. And that is ordered around their figures and that is ordered around their thinking. And that ought to be something that we challenge and hopefully coming out of today. There'll be ways that we can actually work out that we can actually challenge those sorts of notions of who designs for us rather than us designing for us. Thank you.

Speaker 3 ([06:37](#)):

[Inaudible]

Jani Baker ([06:38](#)):

Thank you. Jeff thought provoking as usual. Now we might throw over to our panel, as I mentioned before. I'm firstly going to introduce gab, who is a world who's renowned in the fashion industry in south Australia, having graced the catwalks, as well as operating behind the scenes for many years in the fashion industry, she heads that little line PR agency, which I spoke to very quickly beforehand, and she works with a number of high end fashion brands, as well as the Adelaide fashion festival. Gab, the question that I've got for you today is do you think that the brands that you work with are catching on to the buying power of older people when it comes to fashion?

Gabrielle Leonello ([07:20](#)):

Look, I think we've come from a place where over the last few decades, that certainly hasn't been the case. I think fashion, the fashion industry, like other industries are more fragmented these days, which is allowing this sort of specialization into what was originally marginalized groups. It's not only just for older people, but also plus size different ethnic groups, that kind of thing. Now being represented. I'm going to show you a video shortly from the latest Stacia Gabbana Haut couture show that was in Como in Italy. And these shows for anyone that doesn't know about fashion, they basically set the same for all of the different fashion houses in terms of what the fashion trends are going to be for that season. So they're very directional in terms of setting the same fashion for fashion globally. And I think what's interesting in this show is that you've got a model that's wearing a burka, you've got a plus size model.

Gabrielle Leonello ([08:21](#)):

You've got an older model in terms of, you know, someone around the 70, 75 age bracket. And you've also got models that represent that 40 to 50 year old bracket, which in the past have traditionally been overlooked fashion has always been a very aspirational. And we'll hear more about the advertising side of that a little bit later, but the basic premise is, you know, you want to try and achieve the unattainable. And so what they've done over the last few decades is put 14 year old models forward for skincare. And, you know, I mean, it just doesn't relate anymore. And I think as a consumer base, we're getting we're more aware of that these days, but also we've got an aging sort of community. So it's it's it was a beautiful show. But as you can see in a show like this, you'd never normally say those sort of what traditionally have been marginalized groups, you know, Haut couture show.

Gabrielle Leonello ([09:23](#)):

I think the quote that I had on Eylea was by one of the designers. We respect all the religions, all the cultures, all the sizes, all the ages, this is the modern life because they were queried and questioned about the diversity that they showcased in this particular show. So I think what that's showing is promising in terms of the representation of age within sort of in a fashion perspective, anyway, what I've done is I've actually just pulled up just a couple of campaign images from over the decades to showcase sort of the evolution of how we sort of got here. You know, Dolce Gabbana there, Italian it's an Italian label. The two designers are from Sicily and they've always, it's always been very being very glamorous sexy and sort of that beautiful high-end fashion. They've always, it's always felt European.

Gabrielle Leonello ([10:21](#)):

So you can say looking at that picture from the 1980s, the 1990s, the other one's cut off a little bit, very, very young models. And I can pretty much confirm that not a lot of those young girls or boys could afford to purchase Dodge cabana. They, so then if you look at the, we started to say they used to do a lot of black and white sort of photo work and they moved into color. You know, they were using a lot of models. They became younger in the naughties. So they, they used to use models sort of in their early twenties and in the early early two thousands, they used even younger models of that teenage sort of group. They further tested boundaries in 2007 when they had a picture of a model surrounded by men holding her down.

Gabrielle Leonello ([11:14](#)):

That campaign was actually pulled because it resulted in criticism that the brand was promoting violence against women. So they've always tested the boundaries. The final picture there is from the couture show that we've just saying, and they've had a dramatic sort of push in terms of representing a vast group of different ages in their campaigns. I think it shows that, you know, when you've got a big powerhouse fashion brand like this, doing that, it's showing that that that idea of being inclusive is even more important. It reflects modern life. And I don't think brands can, they can't ignore demographic anymore. If they want the money, they need to represent those people. So I found some research, which was interesting. It's a little bit old it's from 2014, but what it showed was it consumers age 55 plus where the largest demographic in that luxury brand space, again, it's further proof that this is a demographic that they can't ignore has everyone saying, oh, how did this lady?

Gabrielle Leonello ([12:21](#)):

Yeah. So she's a fashion icon of style icon. She's got low loads of personality and has often been put forward in terms of creating noise and awareness around fashion and style, especially with that older

sort of demographic. I guess my personal view is it's if you trade it like a stunt, yes, she's very she can attack at sort of attract that sort of media spotlight, but is she also representative of who that older person is? I don't think she is. I think she, you know, to become older, do you have to sort of be more in terms of being something that you're not to then create a sort of space for yourself?

Jani Baker ([13:07](#)):

And GABA, I think you've just answered the second question that I had for you, which was an if so, do we normalize fashion rather than it being the, the older people, rather than it being the exception. And I think ours is the perfect example of that, and you've just described that nicely.

Gabrielle Leonello ([13:20](#)):

Thank you. All right. So closer to home these shots are from some of the rum wives recently in Australia. So Australian fashion week, David Jones, season launch, and the Melbourne fashion festival all recently had mature aged models in their runway shows. Now this resulted in, in, in a lot of publicity around their shows, which is effectively what you want coming out of these sort of parades. Was it a stunt, a PR stunt, or is it as, is it a sign of things to come? It's probably a bit of both. But certainly the fact that you've got the older demographic hitting the runway, I think is pretty pretty telling of what's what's in front. The other thing that we're saying is just not in age, you've got classic sections within model agencies now. So you can go to an agency and say, you know, we want that older style model. You also have it for other groups. So ethnic in terms of plus size models, all of that sort of thing. Some agencies there's so much work that they just focus on those areas. And I think all of these things indicate that the times of the past, when we've got 14 year old girls who still will feature in fashion, but they're not going to be the sole owners or the face of these brands because they just don't relate to who their customers are.

Jani Baker ([14:43](#)):

Thanks guys. That was fabulous. Thank you very much. Courtney, over to you Courtney has a lifetime of working in TV production and screen. She's been instrumental in delivering gender parity in creative roles for women in TV and his intent in introducing more local talent to our screens. The question I've got for you, Courtney is we're seeing movies come out of the U S and the UK featuring older people in roles other than crotchety grandparent, such as the best exotic Marigold hotel, and more recently finding your feet. How are we going in Australia on that front?

Gabrielle Leonello ([15:21](#)):

I think, you know, aging on screen, I think stereotypes continue to abound here and also across the world and across all agents, because it's not just older characters who get stereotyped. The teen is traditionally either way would or bookish in the same way, the old character is either daughtering or cantankerous at times or both. And that's something to do with the fact that a feature film is two hours long, and there's only a certain amount of time to be exploring character and story. I think things open up more now in this age of those streaming giants and the, you know, six or seven series of a box set where across the series, you really explore complexities in character. I think it's interesting that the exotic marigolds themselves, which is how we refer to that cinema going audience.

Gabrielle Leonello ([16:13](#)):

They are one of the only growing demographics of cinema goers, women over 35 women over 55, the exotic marigolds themselves are becoming another stereotype because these movies have been so

successful. All the distributors want one or two or three bill knives in all of them. Not that there's anything wrong with that. If we're lucky Miriam Margolyes is in at least half of them. But you know, someone like Bill, he plays almost the same character in all of them. So he effectively gets stereotyped even when we are liberated and finally find some complex characters they're often sort of get quite samey. So as I say, it's more about imitating, I think, than stereotyping trying to emulate really successful films and TV projects with more of the same. I think if you go to women on the screen, they get a tougher time than men.

Gabrielle Leonello ([17:05](#)):

And on TV in particular, when Australian TV really hit its straps, it was in the sixties and seventies, and there were only two kinds of women on TV. Then there were bombshells and there were about Alexis. So in number 96, you had Abigail on the one hand and you had Dory Evans on the other. And every now and then a Maverick would crop up someone like ding-dong Denise dinged on Drysdale or someone like a Mary Hardy who was an absolute comic genius from the old tonight show days in the sixties and seventies. But not that much has changed. I think all the women on screen in Australian TV are rare, you know, women in their fifties and sixties plus there's Margaret Pomeranz, there's Leland chin our own Maggie beer Jennifer Byrne, and now Lisa Wilkinson kind of the kind of emerging, you know, middle aged to getting older women on TV and the pressure on them to look 40 when they are 60 is considerable.

Gabrielle Leonello ([18:04](#)):

And I think men don't get off much more lightly. The tyranny of the hair transplant among using current affairs presenters in particular is still a thing. So you know, you can see them coming from around the corner still. That is something that kind of started happening in the eighties that happens to this day. I think in drama, older people are often the busy bodies as women they're the old, you know, and Mrs. Jessop was such a stalwart in the Sullivans that she was cast is exactly the same character, Mrs. Mangle in neighbors. Lizzy bird's worth in prisoner. These women were always bit players. And I think that's the important thing to take away. Often they're side characters, but so often they stole the show. They're the ones we remember, you know, we remember Eddie and Patsy in alpha, but we remember June Whitfield as Eddie's mum, perhaps, you know, even more sympathetically.

Gabrielle Leonello ([18:58](#)):

I think Sally Wainwright is a screenwriter who writes aging characters really well, a show like last tango in Halifax where the older characters, they are complex, they are authentic, they're central, but I think they're the exception, Sally Wainwright's work as the exception that proves the rule. There's a new character and you older character in TV now, a new trope, if you like sadly called hag exploitations. And it is the rise of the psycho Bidy. And we see it no more clearly than in feud where Susan Surandon, Jessica Lange have it out as Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. So I think, you know, if you found it irritating when all the characters were no more than meddlesome malcontents, now you can be completely infuriated by seeing them portrayed as irredeemably psychotic monsters. I think you know, in TV we go middle age and we don't go much further.

Gabrielle Leonello ([19:57](#)):

And so what tends to happen particularly with actresses is they hit there, they're out there, they're in everything and then everything stops and you don't see them. You don't see them from when they hit middle age until they come back as character actors, you know, when they're in their sixties or even

seventies. And I think, you know, then they playing the feisty older woman, someone like Susan surrounding has been very lucky and she's kind of managed to keep going all this time. But as I say, the exception that proves the rule, I think it's interesting seeing certain, you know, there's Australian producers or Australian stars, who've become producers, someone like Rebecca. Kidney's very interesting. Eh, she's here making wanted series three at the moment and she is a female actor, like many who decides she's gonna write her own parts. She's going to produce her own work in order to keep working as an actor.

Gabrielle Leonello ([20:42](#)):

And if you've got as much clout as Rebecca does, you can walk into a network, you can get a show commissioned and then you can produce that show. So that's what people like her do. And I think it's very interesting, cause I know the head of drama at channel seven, you know, once they'd commissioned series one of wanted and you've seen Rebecca probably in that show, she plays a very ordinary middle aged to getting older woman. The program is at seven quietly, shut themselves for about six months thinking, oh my God, we've taken Australia, sweetheart. And we've turned her into this middle age to old bag. What is the organi audience going to do? They're going to kill us. They're not going to forgive us, but of course what the audience did was embrace it because it's authentic. And this is what Iris is.

Gabrielle Leonello ([21:25](#)):

And Iris came out of a documentary by Albert Maysles. One of the great documentary makers of all time. And it was through that large screen experience that people got to know her across two hours. And while she is outlandish and flamboyant and perhaps not your common or garden, older lady, she's real and she's who she is and she's totally authentic. And I think that's what screen looks for. And just to close if you know, I was thinking about screen the other day and I, this talk the other day and I was remembering Saint Leo DiCaprio for the first time thinking I was of a certain age when I saw him as the boy Romeo in Romeo and Juliet. And then seeing that he's about to play an aging star of TV westerns in Quentin's Tarantino, new, new film. And I thought Christ, I was old when he was young and now he's playing old. What

Gabrielle Leonello ([22:13](#)):

Does that mean for me? Yeah.

Jani Baker ([22:17](#)):

Thank you very much, Courtney, very entertaining. Annette James, over to you. Yeah. For those of you who probably aren't familiar with James's work, Jane has been around the advertising industry for 30 plus years and he's creatively directed many of the iconic ads that we've that have graced our screens over the past few decades, including the the Adelaide festival of arts in 2016 and many premium wine, beer and tourism destinations. So James, your advertising philosophy is big, beautiful and honest. How can we bring honesty into advertising? That's aimed at older people without being too negative or unrealistic?

James Rickard ([23:01](#)):

I think first of all, we could kill the young people in advertising agencies would really help. I think the the issue with smart, smart, thank you. Forgive my type. It didn't transfer to the PC system very well. I think the issue we have is that I work in an industry that is youth obsessed anybody sort of post 40 years on

the way out on into decline. And that's for the people that create the work, let alone the people that they're aiming their work at. So it's, it's, it really is an issue that I think my industry fails at miserably in terms of delivering to this audience. And it's an issue of perception I believe because I think it's a continuum. It isn't one point time. And yet the people that create advertising, look at it from a specific point in time at a point in time, which is completely incorrect. And I'll give an example of, of boomers to to illustrate that there we go. Typically what our industry would do for boomers. Let's throw a bit of technology in for the oldies. That'll make them look hip and call or whatever conga line really give me a problem with, with Jack Kevorkian, please. I don't want to go there. This is, but this is typically what we do because it's coming from the perspective of a 20 or 30 year old.

James Rickard ([24:24](#)):

Conversely, the other end of the spectrum is this RSS featured again. And some people would say, this is an unrealistic representation of that, of that audience. It takes it too far, but I don't believe it does because all of our minds, consumers in particular, I believe there's a saying that if someone gave to me many, many years ago, that a consumer's mind is like under pants elastic, once you stretch it, it never quite goes back to the same size sort of thing. It's really important that we do continue to stretch the perception and we push the boundaries. But I think somewhere in between these two extremes is where the reality lies, but you'll never find one specific image that will actually do the job because I think it's not about image, it's about attitude. And I think that that's a really important point when it comes to connecting consumers, to brands and to products and services is to understand the attitude that connects them, not what they physically look like necessarily because even within the boomers, which I have incidentally at one are describing by a couple of years that's a really diverse audience.

James Rickard ([25:28](#)):

You're talking about a 20 years span. Hey, how can somebody who's 54 B as relatable to somebody who is 74 and we have completely different mindsets. And it's so easy. I mean, our industry continually pigeonholes people into, into boomers, into X, into Y into why not and who not, who knows where next. And it's ridiculous because you can't be that broad have that broad brush approach. Here's a perception of boomers. This is what they listened to Doris Day is more than likely going to be the rolling stones. I was once on a, on a, like enough to go on the GaN for a trip to sort of get to understand the audience and who we're trying to target. And they really wanted to focus at the 60 plus audience and they were playing. I'm going to say, get the lead Zyban tracks out.

James Rickard ([26:14](#)):

I mean, this is crazy. What are you doing? And, oh, by the way, the bar's going to shut at nine 30. Why front unfathomable. But again, it was, it was 20 and 30 something people that were creating the product. You know, this is where the money's at. The kids haven't got any money. My industry is so obsessed with pursuing the youth audience. We know we've got to bring them on the journey and once they grow up that hopefully they'll stay with us, but they haven't got any money. They haven't gotten any life experience. So it makes perfect sense to me. And most of the advertising of recent years that I've been doing for things like Barossa valley Barossa be consumed is targeting an older audience. They've lived the life they have experienced and you know what? They have disposable income. And for people in my industry, that's really important. Boom is created and live by the mantra of sex and drugs and rock and roll. Do you honestly think now after a jolly good game of bingo, they're reaching for their needs.

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Jani Baker ([27:14](#)):

Thank you. Thank you very much James.