

Beauty Independent

Beauty Brands Are Using The Term “Pro-Aging”, But Is The Industry Making Strides Against Ageism?

Rachel Brown | May 22, 2023



In the fight against ageism, which the American Psychological Association describes as “the last socially acceptable prejudice,” ageism appears to be winning—or at least landing major blows. According to an AARP survey, almost two-thirds of workers 45 years old and above experience age discrimination on the job. In and out of work, some 93.4% of 50- to 80-year-olds deal with ageism every single day.

As society grapples with ageist attitudes and the consequences of them, the beauty industry has been confronting its role in demonizing the effects of aging. In 2017, Allure resolved to stop using the term “anti-aging.” Many brands have shifted away from “anti-aging,” too, in favor of terms meant to celebrate aging.

But Business of Fashion beauty editor-at-large Rachel Strugatz isn’t buying them. In a piece last month, she wrote, “Media and brands put a positive spin on getting older with terms like ‘pro-ageing’ and ‘anti-anti-aging.’ Except nothing really changed.”

We were wondering if beauty entrepreneurs also believe nothing has really changed. So, for the latest edition of our ongoing series posing questions relevant to indie beauty, we asked 21 of them the following questions: Has the beauty industry made progress against ageism? What should beauty brands do going forward to address their contributions to the ageism scourge?



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There is a shift being made with acceptance of the aging process. As we embrace diversity, anti-aging would go against that ideal by discriminating against older people. Celebrities like Martha Stewart are gracing the cover of Sports Illustrated, at 81 years old, which shows that there is a shift in the paradigm.

In my practice, I definitely see people who want to age gracefully. It's not about getting rid of every wrinkle or line, but improving the appearance to look like they haven't had anything done. Really, it's to look age appropriate, to show aging at a much slower pace.

I often see patients who want to look 10 to 15 years younger or fresher than they currently look, but also to look the way they do today in about 10 to 15 years from now. Most people don't ask to look 30 years younger because that would look strange and unnatural and invite unwanted scrutiny.

Beauty and fashion have always gone hand in hand, so even fashion brands using older models are indicative of the shift in acceptance in the aging process, which crosses over to the beauty industry as well. Fashion brands like Marc Jacobs using Jessica Lang or J. Crew using Lauren Hutton or Jane Fonda, Helen Mirren and Susan Sarandon modeling for L'Oréal represent this shift that aging is accepted and is beautiful.

As we move forward, beauty brands should focus on maintaining the health of the face and skin aligned with self-care and wellness and allowing self-expression on the user's own terms. Brands can focus on combating oxidants and pollutants that accelerate the aging process, not on identifying the aging process as the enemy.

The challenge is that, from a capitalistic perspective, popularity in sales defines brands and their marketing strategies, so you will find that most products always talk about defying aging and erasing wrinkles.

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