

# Objectification, sexualization and commodification of the spice girls essay



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## Objectification, Sexualization and Commodification of the Spice Girls

The Spice Girls are a cultural phenomenon; the all female group was formed in 1994 and consists of Geri Halliwell, Victoria Beckham, Melanie Brown, Emma Bunton and Melanie Chisholm.

Through their names Baby Spice, Sporty Spice, Scary Spice, Ginger Spice and Posh Spice each member embraced a different female identity that helped to distinguish between them and helped their fans to identify with a certain member. The audience demographic the Spice Girls is primarily directed towards is female youths because of its large potential size and high levels of disposable income. On the surface the British all-girl band the Spice Girls appear to be strong feminist women who command control in their lives and empower the phrase “ girl power” but on closer inspection the Spice Girls endorse a narrow view of fun feminist values and are commercialized objects created to generate profits and further promote the Sexualization and commodification of themselves and all women. Firstly, their choice of clothing, hair, makeup and body image contribute to damaging modes of femininity and offer traditional and sexual images for the male gaze. Secondly, the five distinct identities of the band define and shape the confines of womanhood identities and “ make it difficult for [fans] to think of alternatives” (Hollows 169).

Lastly, the Spice Girls have been marketed and branded so flawlessly that any original Girl Power feminism movement promoting independence and sexual empowerment has been replaced with consumerism. The image that the Spice Girls portrays is that of popular feminism. During their shows, interviews and photograph sessions the Spice Girls are usually dressed in

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scantly clad clothing, revealing a lot of skin. Although each Spice Girls style varies according to their alter ego, they all perform sexy stripteases on stage, endorse wearing makeup and current hairstyle trends which is intended for approval from the gazes of males. This image portrayal produced by the Spice Girls is damaging to defining the modes of femininity because female stereotypes are being repeated and reproduced and audiences are subject to only this limited form of popular femininity. These pop star sensations have slender bodies, rock hard abs and picture perfect faces, and this makes female youths value these attributes higher than others on appearance attributes.

Their slogan “ girl power” to the band means “ being confident with your self” but does not needlessly apply to them because many have had personal problems with eating disorders. Yvonne Abraham once said the Spice Girls “ take feminism’s shell, and fill it up with lip gloss, ribbed condoms, and girls-on-top innuendo. Nobody tells the Spice Girls what to do. They’re young and stylish and sexy as they wannabe. ...[but] Girl Power has its limits.

Take away the sexual freedom and the guiltless push-up bras and you’re not left with much” (Abraham 1997). Through the use of clothing, hairstyles and makeup the Spice Girls contribute to the objectification and Sexualization of themselves and all women. The Spice Girls are also known by their nicknames; Geri is Ginger Spice, Victoria is Posh Spice, Emma is Baby Spice, Mel C is Sporty Spice and Mel B is Scary Spice. By categorizing each girl according to a distinct identity it made advertising and marketing the band to young girls easy; for example if you liked soccer Sporty would be your role <https://assignbuster.com/objectification-sexualization-and-commodification-of-the-spice-girls-essay/>

model. The five Spice Girls each represent different definitions of femininity; Baby Spice is childish and cute, Ginger is spicy and the sexy exhibitionist, Scary Spice is wild and spontaneous, Sporty Spice is athletic and the girl next door, and Posh Spice is the elegant sophisticated snob (Lemish 2003).

According to one critic of the Spice Girls “[i]t all seemed so calculated and vulgar, converting living, breathing women into canvases on which to project our notions of female accomplishment” (Corden 2007).

The Spice Girls offered a limited range of what being a woman could mean and it is hard for female youths to think of alternatives. The effects of the Spice Girls five distinct categories of femininity put our female youth into groups that dressed alike and have similar personalities. In addition, the identities of Posh, Ginger, Baby, Scary and Sporty could effortlessly be marketed to young girls and the Spice Girls could be turned into commodity objects. In conclusion, by classifying the Spice Girls into distinct categories of feminism that can be easily objectified offered limited feminine alternatives to female youths.

The Spice Girls have been marketed and branded so flawlessly that any original Girl Power feminism movement promoting independence and sexual empowerment has been replaced with consumerism. With easily recognized identities of Baby Spice, Posh Spice, Sporty Spice, Scary Spice, and Ginger Spice, the Spice Girls became a “merchandising phenomenon to the pre-teen demographic. Dolls, games, movies, CDs, and clothes were sold under the guise of girl power” (Thorn 2006). The girl power movement the Spice Girls began was so heavily marketed that it has “reduced female aspirations to a series of consumer choices” (Weldon 2007).

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In their songs and movies they promote being strong, sexual and independent women, and they are, but they have been repetitively commoditized and objectified that they instead promote a feminine lifestyle based on consumerism and consumption. For example, they appeared in a number of commercials, most famously for Pepsi and the UK superstore Tesco, by marketing themselves and these products to female youths under the tagline of girl power, its slogan has lost all traditional meanings of independence and equality. Fans of the Spice Girls who idolize them and see them as role models will eventually give into the “ seduction of buying” (Hollows 171) and fulfill a commodity inspired lifestyle. In conclusion, the Spice Girls do not empower girl power features of being strong and independent feminist women, instead they have become subject to the clever marketing tool that promotes the Sexualization, commodification and objectification of all women.

The type of feminism the Spice Girls promote is a fun and flimsy one that is aimed towards the male gaze and this can be identified through their clothing, hair and body styles. In addition by classifying the Spice Girls into distinct categories of feminism that can be easily recognized and objectified offered a limited selection of feminine alternatives to young girls. Most importantly, the effects that marketing and advertising had on the Spice Girls is so grand that it stripped away any real feminist movement of girl power and turned them into commodity objects that are subject to the gaze from both males and females. The Spice Girls are clearly a cultural phenomenon that has helped to shape popular feminism; hopefully these

blockades can be broken though and other forms of feminism will give rise.

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