

## British Brands Thrive Despite Economic Challenges

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British brands are enjoying a resurgence despite the current gloomy economic outlook, with a renewed sense of national identity playing a key role in their success.

A notable example of this revival is the England women's football team, known as the Lionesses. Their appearance in Marks & Spencer tailoring, alongside the national flags decorating their victory bus, symbolises the re-emergence of 'Cool Britannia' as a business

formula. This renewed British pride is translating into increased consumer interest and brand strength.

One quintessential British brand benefiting from this trend is Laura Ashley. Renowned for its floral designs in wear, furniture, and homeware, Laura Ashley was acquired earlier this year by US firm Marquee Brands, which also owns the Martha Stewart lifestyle business. Poppy Marshall-Lawton, who is leading Laura Ashley's revival, highlighted the global appetite for British brands that remain true to their heritage. She said, "British brands that dial into and stay true to their roots cut through the noise. The global appetite is very strong and, if you can lean into this unique identity, you can connect with a new generation of customers."

Burberry is another prominent beneficiary of this trend. The brand's shares have risen almost 60 per cent over the past three months, signalling strong investor confidence. Burberry's turnaround strategy focuses on iconic products such as trench coats and bucket hats, the latter seeing a revival thanks to renewed interest in 'Cool Britannia' streetwear, partly inspired by Oasis concerts.

Steve Fine, head of stockbroker Peel Hunt, pointed out that UK firms are currently viewed as bargains by US investors. He attributed this to the relatively low domestic confidence in the UK market, saying, "Our domestic self-esteem is quite low." He urged Britons to regain confidence despite political uncertainties, which could help sustain and build on the recent positive economic momentum.

Overall, while the wider economic forecast remains cautious, the resurgence of British brands with strong cultural roots is proving a bright spot. Their success suggests that a combination of heritage, authenticity, and savvy marketing continues to resonate both at home and abroad, providing a solid foundation for future growth.