



Brand Britain

Turning up the heat



It's time to stop the self-deprecation and shout loud about Britain's unique qualities, according to brand expert Rita Clifton. Since the '70s, 'Made in Britain' has become a valuable asset.

What's interesting about the image of Britain over the last 10 to 20 years is that I believe we've kept our bedrock – the tradition, the trustworthiness, the stability – but we've added qualities such as dynamism, open-mindedness, innovation and productivity. The Royal Family has always been a symbol of Britain's valued heritage, and William and Kate now epitomise the fact that tradition and modernisation can go hand in hand. *Downton Abbey* has been so successful because it combines the appeal of British

“ BRITISH COMPANIES SHOULD BE LOOKING AT THE QUALITIES OF THEIR BRAND AND AT WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO THEIR PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS.”

history with the global allure of modern celebrities.

The strength of brand Britain has been built from real achievements – from the Olympics, which was a great showcase for our sense of humour, our traditions and our creativity, to the global success of British celebrities, sports, computer games, music, film, fashion, high-end manufacturing and, of course, professional and financial services.

There are brand ambassadors in individuals such as David Beckham, in companies, such as BA, which modernised and transformed in the '80s into a truly global player, and in products such as the folding Brompton bike, which exemplifies our expertise at the technological end of manufacture.

However, I don't think we're very good at believing in ourselves or at being ambitious. Even among entrepreneurs, I see a lot more ambition when speaking to people in the US than in Britain.

Brand Britain, though, isn't just about sticking a label onto your product. While it can give you a competitive advantage in some parts of the world and some industries, it has to reflect the desirable qualities that are implicit

in what you do. The Britishness of ASOS and Topshop, for example, is about reflecting real creativity.

It's an exciting time to be a British business, but it would help to have a more positive public environment for business and enterprise. Although there are plenty of examples of British businesses that have

succeeded abroad, only four of the world's top 100 most valuable brands are British.

It's ironic that our amazing creative industries have been so successful in building some of these top brands, but we don't

do the same when it comes to developing and sustaining our own.

British companies should be looking at the qualities of their brand and at what's important to their prospective customers. They can then dial up the elements that match most closely – in many cases, that could be about highlighting brand Britain. We're not always good at seeing the potential ourselves – it took an American CEO to spot the value of Burberry's Britishness.

We have a lot to sell – an extraordinary combination of style, quality, tradition and innovation. It's unique in the world. 

