

The Union Jack



Most British people probably like the Union Jack but, to be honest, they do not pay it much attention. It is raised on occasions such as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, but other wise it does not appear very often in daily life.

Thus some Britons are slightly bemused when they travel abroad and see the Union Jack used a fashion symbol on a variety of items, from T-shirts and jackets to bags and even jewelry. In Asia too, the Union Jack has been noticeable on the clothes and accessories of many young people.

Why is the Union Jack so popular in fashion?

The first point is that, among national flags, it is colorful and distinctive. People tend to think that it is an attractive design. It can also be distorted or transformed, and still be identified as the Union Jack. Even if the colors are changed, we can still recognize the familiar design. Thus designers have the freedom to create new items with unique styles of the Union Jack.

Also, the lines of the Union Jack appear to spread out from the center point. This means that it can be used successfully on a variety of different-shaped items. Consider a round-shaped item. It would be difficult to apply, for example, a vertical tricolor flag to this, but a Union Jack pattern works well. It is a design that can be used very flexibly and that must also surely increase its appeal.

Another aspect is that it is not a copyrighted symbol. This is very important in the fashion and retailing businesses. When the Union Jack is used, although it is a world famous icon, no royalties have to be paid.

Young people around the world tend to like the Union Jack because Britain generally has a somewhat positive image on the world stage. British pop and rock music, for example, have been popular for many decades. In the past, a rock group called The Who used the Union Jack as an icon in photographs and for their stage clothes. These days, British singers are still globally popular, and the Union Jack may somehow reflect this popularity.

When we asked several young Japanese people why they had items with a Union Jack motif, a common response was that "It's cool." Most Brits will be happy to hear that, even though they themselves probably have no Union Jack clothes or accessories.