

A close-up photograph of three women from the television show Charmed, looking directly at the camera with serious expressions. The woman on the left has blonde hair, the middle woman has dark hair, and the woman on the right has dark hair and is wearing a necklace.

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POP THEORY

THE SUPERSTITION ISSUE

Etsy Witches, Football Curses and Pub Psychic Nights are Gripping the Nation

As we navigate an uncertain world, Brits are increasingly leaning into the allure of superstition. From the growing popularity of TikTok tarot card readers to the rise of pub psychic nights, the nation is investing more time, money and faith into content, purchases and experiences that aren't backed by science, but instead have an otherworldly, metaphysical appeal. Witchy content has decades-deep resonance - 90's shows like [Charmed](#) and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* still have loyal fanbases, and kids programme [The Worst Witch](#) remains an audience favourite on ITVX. Now - in an era defined by unpredictability - it seems that Brits are opening their hearts, minds and wallets to the world of superstition as a means of regaining that much-needed sense of emotional optimism. In this issue of Pop Theory, we're unpacking how and why superstition is manifesting (pardon the pun) across British lives.

STUDS, SPELLS & SCRUFFY SOCKS

[Ahead of the World Cup, Pepsi asked England stars Harry Kane, Jordan Pickford and Declan Rice what their pre-game rituals are](#), revealing quirky, superstition-charged routines adhered to by the players. Harry Kane religiously puts on his kit left-to-right, while Declan Rice is loyal to his lucky breakfast of pancakes and syrup. But superstitions surrounding sport certainly don't end with the players; [research from O2](#) reveals that 3 in 4 British sports fans believe that their personal pre-match ritual has led to a win for their team, while a [spiritual leader from Ghana](#) [has recently been making playful headlines](#) for both placing and lifting curses on England captain Harry Kane throughout the World Cup.

So, why do Brits lean into superstition when it comes to their favourite sports? Our *What Unites Fans* research found that the most



active and emotionally charged form of behaviour amongst sports fans is a desire to have *skin in the game*; aka, some form of control over the narrative and outcome of their sport. Enter, superstitions. Sports fans often lean into lucky symbols and rituals as a means of calming nerves and feeling like they are doing their bit to influence positive outcomes from a distance. We captured the spirit of a sentimental sports fan when we spoke to Wolves fan Stuart, from the outskirts of Birmingham - he told us “*my Wolves socks are completely threadbare, but I still wear them for luck*”. Superstitions provide sports fans with a sense of emotional closeness to their team, and that much-desired feeling of making a positive, luck-inducing contribution to the shared outcome.



Sports fandom is a hotbed for superstitious beliefs and behaviours. For brands and creators, be brave and be dynamic when it comes to appealing to fan bases, because their superstitions come loaded with passion, a sense of heritage, collective emotion and disposition towards action. Take cues from the likes of Heinz Brazil, [whose pre World Cup campaign](#) speaks to the unfiltered passion embodied by being a football fan. Their campaign celebrates the stains on football jerseys that inevitably occur during tense match-watching moments, speaking directly to a widely-held sentiment in football culture; that a piece of clothing worn for a winning match should go unwashed in order to keep the winning streak alive.

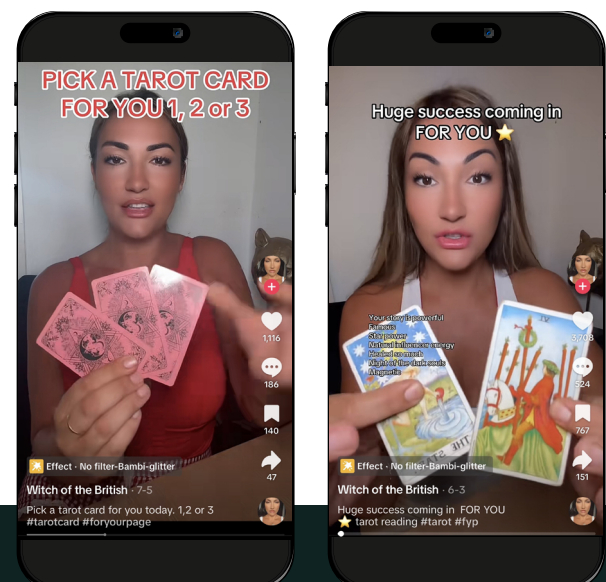
INSTITUTIONS OUT, SUPERSTITIONS IN

Honesty is the number one value that Brits want the government to promote in 2026, with a whopping 62% of the UK public agreeing with the

statement “*I feel resentful towards political and economic systems*” (ITV What Unites a Kingdom, 2026). Our latest piece of research [What Makes Content Catch](#) found that a sense of certainty and stability was the top priority emotional need amongst audiences, reflecting the mood of a nation yearning for emotional reassurance but living with little faith in their governments to deliver protection and wellbeing. As our trust in institutions sits at a very low low, our interest in superstition-charged offerings is growing.

Across social media, many are turning to their FYP's for emotional conviction. TikTok figures like [Witch of the British](#) are amassing millions of likes off the back of digital tarot reading content, speaking directly to viewers' hopes and fears via topics like romance, finance and career. The videos capture attention from the word go, commonly opening with mysterious lines like ‘*if this video has found you on X date, this message is for you*’. [One journalist exploring the TikTok tarot phenomenon](#) hypothesises that tarot content - which alludes to being part of a larger system of planets, solar systems and determined destinies - helps audiences to feel part of something larger than life, and that the optimistic nature of the content offers a sense of safety and hopefulness that we are struggling to find elsewhere.

Across UK pubs, community clubs and even Toby Carvery's, a wave of ticketed group psychic nights are cropping up. [A recent piece of research funded by The International Research Network for the Study of Science and Belief in Society](#) discovered that many people who frequent psychic nights find themselves hooked on attending because the events help them to manage emotions ranging from grief and loss to curiosity about supernatural forces, all felt on top of the underlying uncertainty that characterises life in Britain today.



95% of psychic night attendees were female - many of whom had a longstanding interest in content about paranormal activity - and the events bridge humour and curiosity with larger-scale feelings about meaning, love and relationships. We recently found that audiences often engage with spooky, gory and taboo content and experiences as a means of managing fears and anxieties. Think of it as a form of low-stakes exposure therapy; we indulge in content that we know might make us scared, with the expectation that we will leave feeling more safe and secure (What Makes Content Catch, ITV, 2026).

For brands and media agencies looking to tap into this space, don't be afraid to embrace supernatural or mystical themes. Audiences love to test the waters when it comes to their hopes and fears, ironically in pursuit of feeling safe and secure.

MANIFESTATION FOR THE NATION

Recent YouGov research suggests that cultural rhythms of today are experienced through a crisis-shaped lens. Yet, manifestation - a self-development practice that teaches its followers to liberate themselves from limiting beliefs by blending practical psychology with notions of energy frequencies and higher powers - has sparked the curiosity of Brits. Research commissioned by Adobe showed that 1 in 4 Brits practise manifestation weekly, with 72% of 18-24 year olds and 69% of 25-34 year olds believing in the power of manifestation to help them reach personal goals and achieve dreams. Manifestation was popularised on TikTok, and for Gen-Z - many of whom were christened by the algorithm - manifesting is a ritual of everyday life. In 2024 Cambridge Dictionary named 'manifest' the word of the year, turning what was formerly a mere adjective into a certified cultural phenomenon.

Manifestation's popularity shows us how rapidly esoteric, self-development coded ways of thinking can take hold, especially in a time period where attitudes towards religion are scattered and 48% of Brits are prioritising protecting their personal wellbeing over that of the collective (What Unites a Kingdom 2026, ITV). Figures like Roxie Nafousi popularised manifestation beyond the walls of social media, rebranding a practice typically considered witchy and woo woo into something

sensical to mainstream audiences. Through a mix of TV appearances (she's a [This Morning](#) regular), podcast appearances, social media content and even a best-selling book release, Roxie introduced a clean-cut, aesthetic edition of manifestation to Brits and inspired the nation to take destiny into their own hands. Love Island's very own [Maya Jama is a key pop-culture proponent for manifestation](#), regularly taking to social media to share with her 2.3 million followers how powerful a force manifestation has been in her journey to success.

Some of us are even turning to Etsy to take that extra step towards securing our manifestations. Relationship problems? Manifesting last minute tickets to Harry Styles' tour? Rain forecast for your wedding day? Fear not, because there's an Etsy Witch for that. *What on earth is an Etsy Witch* I hear you ask. Etsy Witches are self-proclaimed practitioners who sell a myriad of different spells online - with many of the offerings on Etsy acquiring over 2,000 five star reviews. Etsy prohibited the sale of 'Metaphysical Services' back in the mid-2010s, but many witches manage to bypass this by listing their services under entertainment categories, and the UK spells market has been gaining significant traction since mid 2025.



Google searches for 'Etsy Witch' have been steadily on the rise since August 2025

So, for those wanting to lean into the cultural currency of manifestation, remember that you're speaking to audiences operating with selfhood, opportunity and empowerment at the forefront of their minds.

