



Pant A, B, C

Sector: Retail

Region: Denmark

Best Practice: PANT ABC demonstrates how clear guidance to consumers can improve recyclability. Financial incentives in the form of deposits are used to encourage consumers to return beverage containers for reuse or recycling.



Figure 1

[The ABC system](#) or “Pant A”, “Pant B” and “Pant C” marks (see Figure 1) various bottles and cans that can be returned using reverse vending machines located at certified grocery stores and at deposit stations in Denmark. All soft drink bottles and cans, beers, alcopops and juice products in Denmark have a fee that is paid upon purchase:

- Pant A = DKK 1.00 (less than 1L glass bottles and aluminium cans)
- Pant B = DKK 1.50 (less than 1L plastic bottles)
- Pant C = DKK 3.00 (1-20L bottles and cans)

These fees are not included in the price tags at stores and are calculated at the till. When the bottles and cans are returned to the reverse vending machines, a receipt is printed. Consumers can get the money back in cash or use it when making a purchase at the store. If a consumer’s nearest grocery store or gas station does not have a reverse vending machine, they can usually hand over their bottles or cans to the staff and get the deposit back. The reverse vending machine feeds the bottles and cans into containers that are collected by Dansk Retursystem, a Danish not-for-profit organisation that handles the Danish Container deposit system. The operator collects the bottles and cans and then recycles, melts and turns them into new bottles and cans.

Pant is the Danish word for deposit, the ABC deposit mark is a registered trademark ® owned by Dansk Retursystem. Countries such as Germany, Sweden and Norway also operate similar deposit-return schemes.

In 2019, the Dansk Retursystem reached a return percentage of 92% meaning 9 out of 10 containers were returned for recycling by consumers.

Principle 1: Reliability



The Dansk Retursystem has operated the Danish deposit system since 2002 and is legally required to collect all empty one-way (disposable) packaging on which deposits have been paid throughout the whole of Denmark. The deposit system was founded by the great Danish breweries together with the governmental authorities and is still monitored by the Ministry of Environment.

Build your claims on a reliable basis

- Accurate and scientifically true
- Robust and consistent
- Substantiated data and assumptions

The return percentage is measured as the relation between beverages in bottles and cans sold on the market with deposit marks, and bottles and cans with deposit marks returned from consumers.

Principle 2: Relevance



According to the Dansk Retursystem [website](#), about 86% of all deposit-marked bottles and cans sold in Denmark are single-use: the packaging after use is recycled in a process where it is sorted in material fractions, melted and formed again. Returning bottles and cans conserves raw materials because recycling the material takes a lot less energy than producing new bottles and cans. [95% less energy](#) is utilised when producing a can of repurposed material instead of producing an entirely new one.

Talk about major improvements, in areas that matter

- Significant aspects ('hotspots') covered
- Not masking poor product performance, no burden shifting
- Genuine benefit which goes beyond legal compliance

The Danish deposit and return system is based on the principle of a closed resource cycle. Through Dansk Retursystem, one empty bottle or can becomes nearly one new bottle or can. Very little material is wasted during this process and resources are saved.

Principle 3: Clarity



The presence of the different marks 'Pant A', 'Pant B' and 'Pant C' signifies that different amounts of money are refunded to the consumer depending on the type of material used in the bottles and cans and the volume of each bottle or can. Only bottles and cans which are part of the scheme are permitted to bear the ABC system mark. Pant is Danish for 'deposit' and appears on the label which adds to its clarity.

Make the information useful for the consumer

- Exclusive and direct link between claim and product
- Explicit and easy to understand
- Limits of claim clearly stated

The deposit mark is either printed directly on the bottle or attached to the bottle or can with a small sticker. Consumers can easily recognise it as a return scheme through the circular two arrow symbol.

Principle 4: Transparency



The Dansk Retursystem [website](#) provides information on the deposit mark, the amounts refunded and the aims to achieve a high percentage of returns. It further provides information on how consumers' contribution to the deposit system will help contribute to a cleaner environment by saving natural resources and energy.

Satisfy the consumer's appetite for information, and do not hide

- Developer of the claim and provider of evidence published
- Traceability and generation of claim (methods, sources, etc.) published
- Confidential information open to competent bodies

The website details information on different types of recycling and explains why Dansk Retursystem is hygienic and good for the environment. The aluminium, glass and plastic from bottles and cans are not mixed with aluminium, glass and plastic from other items and therefore remains high enough quality for food packaging.

Principle 5: Accessibility



The ABC deposit mark (see Figure 1) is clearly visible on the packaging and easy to find at the moment of purchase. The marks are split into A, B and C which represent different amounts in exchange. Nearly 3000 stores throughout Denmark have reverse vending machines, where consumers can return all deposit marked bottles and cans. This enables easy access to the scheme and encourages the use of the system.

Let the information get to the consumer, not the other way around

- Clearly visible: claim easily found
- Readily accessible: claim close to the product, and at required time and location

In addition to reverse vending machines, consumers can also return bottles and cans with a deposit mark to a 'pantstation' (deposit return bank) where they can return a bulk of up to 90 bottles and cans at a time. Currently, there are twelve towns or cities in Denmark that have a 'pantstation'.

Key learnings

- This is a good example of a recycling financing mark which is leading to consumer behaviour change and achieving a high percentage of bottles and cans being recycled and reused.
- These types of schemes tend to work best for higher value packaging for which recycling is economically attractive and usually are mainly employed for beverage containers.
- Similar deposit-based recycling schemes can be set up for other types of packaging. In countries where governments are not willing or lacking the capacity to set up such schemes, they could be implemented by the private sector.

