Great Danes: Famous Danish brands to aspire to and fall in love with

Category: Branding
written by Stewart Hodgson | 22 May 2017

For a nation that's made up of less than 6 million people (5.614 million as of 2013, to be exact), Denmark is an aspiring example of how a small country can punch far above its weight. This incredible little country is famous throughout the globe for its high-quality television, delicious restaurants, mouth-watering beer, impeccable fashion, music, furniture and…bacon.

In fact, some of the most renowned designers – past and present – in the world call Denmark their home. These are the people that aspiring creatives learn about in school, including names like Louis Poulsen, Fritz Hansen, and Norman Copenhagen. So, what is it that makes the Danish brand so effective? Why have all things "Denmark" become associated with quality, style, collectability and heritage?

The simple answer is: good branding.

The Danes are inherently proud of their design heritage. It's something that they begin learning about at an early age. Think about it. How many Brits could name mid-century product and furniture designers from their own country? Probably not very many. However, in Denmark, the locals have a sense of national pride that runs deep. In the best possible way, they believe that they really are the best in the world, and they make sure they brand themselves that way.

Famous Danish brands: What we can learn from Danish companies

Though this article may at times seem like a celebration of all things Danish, it's more of a look at Denmark's impeccable branding capabilities, and an exploration into what we can learn from some of the most famous Danish brands in the market.

The Danish cultural brand is a lot like the "Made in Britain" concept that we have here at home. The only difference is that the Danes take their country far more seriously. They have a deep-set philosophy for quality not quantity. That's why when you buy a piece of Danish furniture, you expect to keep it for life, not just a couple of years.

The Danes make products with heart and soul. There are fewer "mass produced" names, a greater number of boutique brands, and every company has a backstory that helps the customer to connect with them on a deeper level. Perhaps the most important thing that we can learn from Danish brands, then, is that any company, no matter how small, can achieve incredible things. All you need to do to accomplish that market development, is be innovative, imaginative, and efficient. Just like Denmark.

In the UK right now, it's hard to see too many Brits that are genuinely proud to be British. This obviously has an impact on our national brand. On the other hand, in Denmark, citizens are flying their flag with pride. There's no stigma attached to the idea of being Danish, and people are genuinely proud of everything the country creates.

Many Danish companies, such as the audio and loudspeaker manufacturer, Dali, still build many of their products at home, regardless of whether it's cheaper to run factories elsewhere. They know that their customers will pay more for

beautiful aesthetics, great practicality, and quality, so they don't try to cut corners.

For a great example of how Danish brands are connected with value and quality, you need only take a look at Bang & Olufsen. In the history of industrial products, only a handful of brands have emerged as shorthand for great design. Braun nailed the concept of German simplicity in the heyday of Dieter Rams, while Apple is all about American innovation. However, no brand has ever been so consistently synonymous with great design as Bang & Olufsen.

B&O was founded in 1925, and they were the first to adopt the AC current, when old batteries and the DC current were still the norm. Over the years, they've become a pioneer for design enhancement, which is why their products remain to be some of the most highly sought-after items in Denmark, and indeed across the world.

Here, we're going to take a closer look at the Danish brands you should aspire to, and learn from. Then, we're going to distil the valuable Danish branding lessons you can learn into one quick, simple, and effective pathway to success.

Let's get started.

Danish fashion brands: Branding examples to aspire to

Denmark might not be the first place you think of when you're trying to pinpoint the fashion capital of the world. However, watch this space, as that could change pretty soon. The Danish world of fashion design is growing rapidly, with new names blazing trails across the globe. The Copenhagen fashion festival, for instance, takes place twice a year, where companies can come together to show off their branding, their personality, and what makes the Danish fashion scene so

unique.

One thing you'll notice about Danish fashion, is that it's deeply creative and innovative. It doesn't necessarily just follow what's going on in the local space. Instead, it examines what's going on across the globe, and comes up with fresh and unique ways to display different ideas. Each designer has their own philosophy, a sort of brand manifesto that shows through every collection they create. These aren't the mass-produced items you see on the rack, they have heart.

1. Wood Wood

The first thing that Wood Wood does right from a branding perspective, is that they've chosen a simple name. It's easy to remember, interesting, and different. The organic nature of the name also links to the underlying ethos of the brand, which is all about creating "streetwear" for the Danish people.



The logo is clear and surprisingly simple, but as soon as you visit the brand's website, you're greeted with an insight into

their personal story. The company is about style, attitude, and flexibility. Over the years, the trends that they've produced have changed to meet with the needs of their audience. It's this simple and effective branding that helped Danish clothing brands like these explode around the world.

2. Armoire d'Homme

If there's one thing that Denmark does exceptionally well, it's the "minimalist" design. People from Denmark don't see the need to decorate their creations with too many bells and whistles. Instead, they're looking for a way to offer something useful, effective, and clear-cut. Every aspect of Armoire d'homie's brand underlines this minimalist approach.

The company has made a name for itself for respecting classic design and tradition – two things that Danes love. All the while, its branding goes even deeper, because the company have aligned their brand story with economic and sustainable practices. In other words, they're relatable. They have values their customers can connect with.

3. Astrid Andersen

Astrid Andersen is a newer name in the world of Danish fashion brands, but that doesn't mean that it's any less iconic. Currently, it's one of the best examples you can find of high fashion embracing street culture. This company has focused on making sure it stands out from the crowd, by doing something that's never been done before.



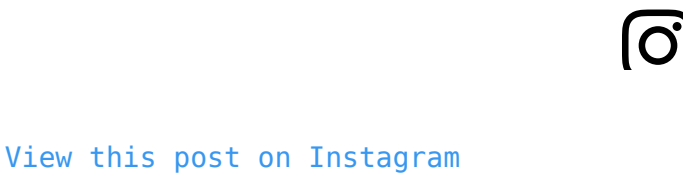
View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Astrid Andersen (@astridandersens)

In other words, they embrace the number one rule of branding: Be different. Astrid Andersen have developed something of a cult following thanks to their ability to recognise cultural boundaries and smash them to pieces by challenging notions of branding, proportions, and masculinity.

4. Soulland

Soulland is all about the “European” look. The brand has set themselves apart from other designers in the Danish space by creating a playful personality informed by traditional design trends. In their brand manifesto, Soulland outline the fact that they’ve been inspired by contemporary aesthetics, and traditional Scandinavian design.



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Soulland (@soulland)

Here's a brand that started off with nothing more than hand-printed T-shirts in 2002. Today, the name is a full-sized global icon. There are stores in London, Paris and all across Europe that maintain that all-important Danish background.

5. Henrik Vibskov

One of the most powerful things that any company can do when it comes to branding, is find their own niche. Henrik Vibskov is an example of one of the Danish fashion brands that has done this perfectly. Their clothes are associated with the "New Nordic Movement", and Vibskov is one of the few Danish designers to be associated with runway fashion.

Everything about this company's branding is fashion-first. In fact, the brand has gotten such a significant following, that their fans actually follow them in shoes around the world.

Danish furniture design: Branding examples to aspire to

Let's move on to look at Danish furniture design.

The chances are that you've explored the concept of Danish furniture brands in the past if you've ever found yourself looking for a high-quality item for your home. Denmark has earned a reputation for quality and timeless beauty, thanks to its long history of functional, and simple design creations.

By combining different technologies from around the world, Danish furniture brands have done incredible things for the "Danish" label. After all, they've managed to change the public perception of design from something that can be used to enhance everyday life.

What makes Danish furniture design so special is the underlying values that exist in every piece. When you buy a piece of furniture from Denmark, you know that you're getting something that was designed not only to be practical and comfortable, but also to last a lifetime.

We're not talking about your average item from Ikea, here. Danish design is something that has been used in homes for centuries, and it's still making an impact today. This is because it has a versatility and appeal that allows households to stand out in a way that's completely unique.

Danish branded items might be simple in nature, but they're also incredibly elegant and full of sophistication. Perhaps the most important lesson for small companies to learn from Danish furniture designers, is that simple, is often effective.

Let's take a look at some of the greats.

1. Arne Jacobsen

One of the most recognisable names in Danish design, Arne Jacobsen's creations are still highly sought-after today. When they were first created, Arne Jacobsen's designs were lightyears ahead of their time and the space they occupied. And today, they continue to achieve a modern and sophisticated look that's difficult to find anywhere else.



Credit: Petri Krohn

2. Hans J. Wegner

Perhaps the thing that makes Hans J. Wegner so appealing as a designer is that he didn’t just create “a chair”, he created “the chair”. Basically, these are the functional chairs that you’ll still see used all over Denmark today.



Credit: Ew3234

3. Borge Mogensen

Borge Mogensen was one of the biggest reasons why Danish furniture brands have become so iconic today. The world respects the items produced in Denmark because of people like Mogensen, who created design classics that are exhibited in galleries around the globe.



Credit: Ramblersen

4. Kaare Klint

Known by many as the father of modern Danish design, Kaare Klint designed his first piece of furniture back in 1914. His simplistic and functional approach to furniture design lead to the creation of recognisable pieces like the church chair, propeller stool, and safari chair.



Credit: lglazier618

5. Paul Kjærholm

Finally, Paul Kjærholm was an award-winning designer of furniture and a professor at the Danish Design institute until he died in 1980. Today, his pieces are exhibited widely around the world, and continue to be firm favourites among the Danes.



Credit: Diogo Valério

Danish jewellery brands: Branding examples to aspire to

Hopefully, what you've learned so far about Danish branding is that they're fantastic at showing their core values, and incredible at sticking to solutions that are simple, and functional. One final area that we'll need to look at before we come to the end of our exploration into Danish branding, is Danish jewellery brands.

Perhaps what makes Danish jewellery so interesting, is that it doesn't rely on an obsession with tradition to be successful. While gold is popular in the country, you'll find that unconventional materials are the ones that typically garner the most appreciation. Another thing that's worth noting about Danish jewellery brands, is that each of them come with an

incredible background story.

Let’s look at some examples.

1. Goldsmith Ole Lynggaard

Starting with something traditional, Goldsmith Ole Lynggaard have built their brand upon classic foundations. They’ve established themselves as a “family-run” company, since they were first established in 1963. Over the following decades, the brand has become known for luxury, innovative design, and high quality. One thing that makes this company so different, is its focus on heritage and family. You can even see the family tree on their website:

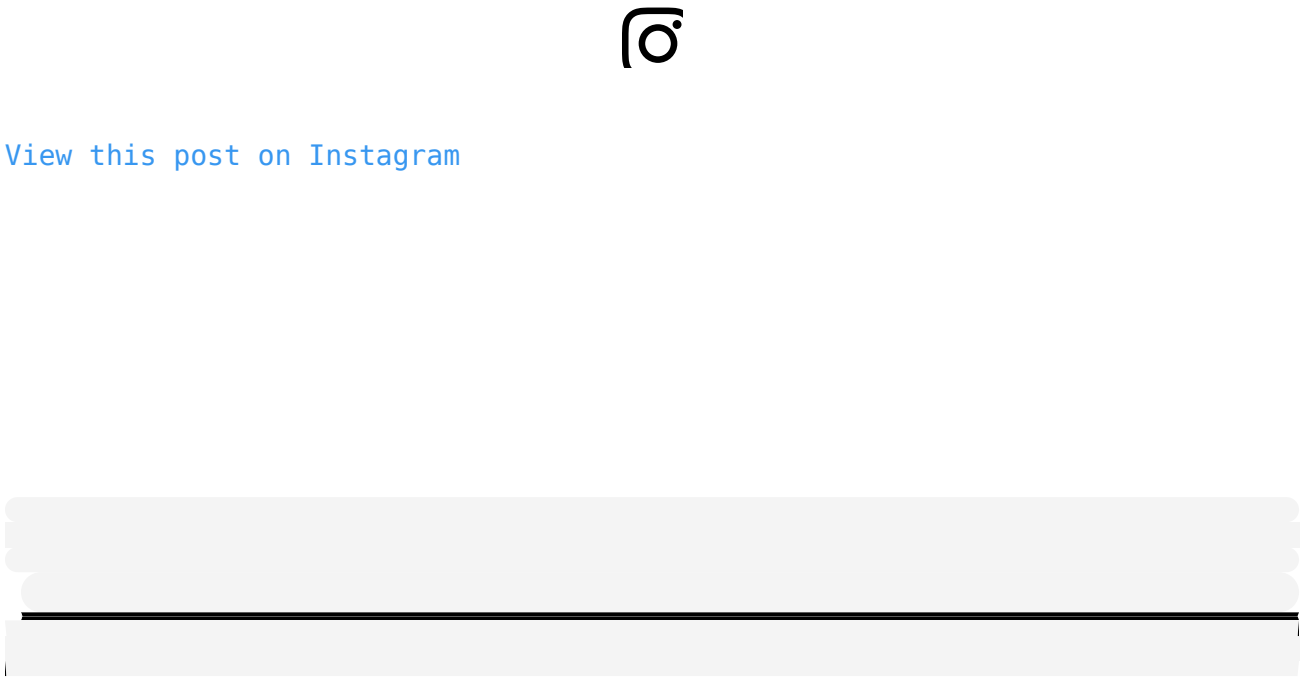


Credit: Ole Lynggaard

Sticking to the concept of cultural loyalty, almost all of the jewellery for this brand is produced at the company’s studio in the north of Copenhagen. There are more than 45 different goldsmiths working in the studio, making it one of the largest fine jewellery workshops in Northern Europe.

2. LadyFingers

Something slightly less traditional, the Ladyfingers brand is part of a jewellery design collective made up of six Danish designers. Similarly to the brand we mentioned above, this company is all about its brand story. Ladyfingers have earned a following thanks to their inspirational background, which began with six people coming together to inspire each other in the world of jewellery craft.



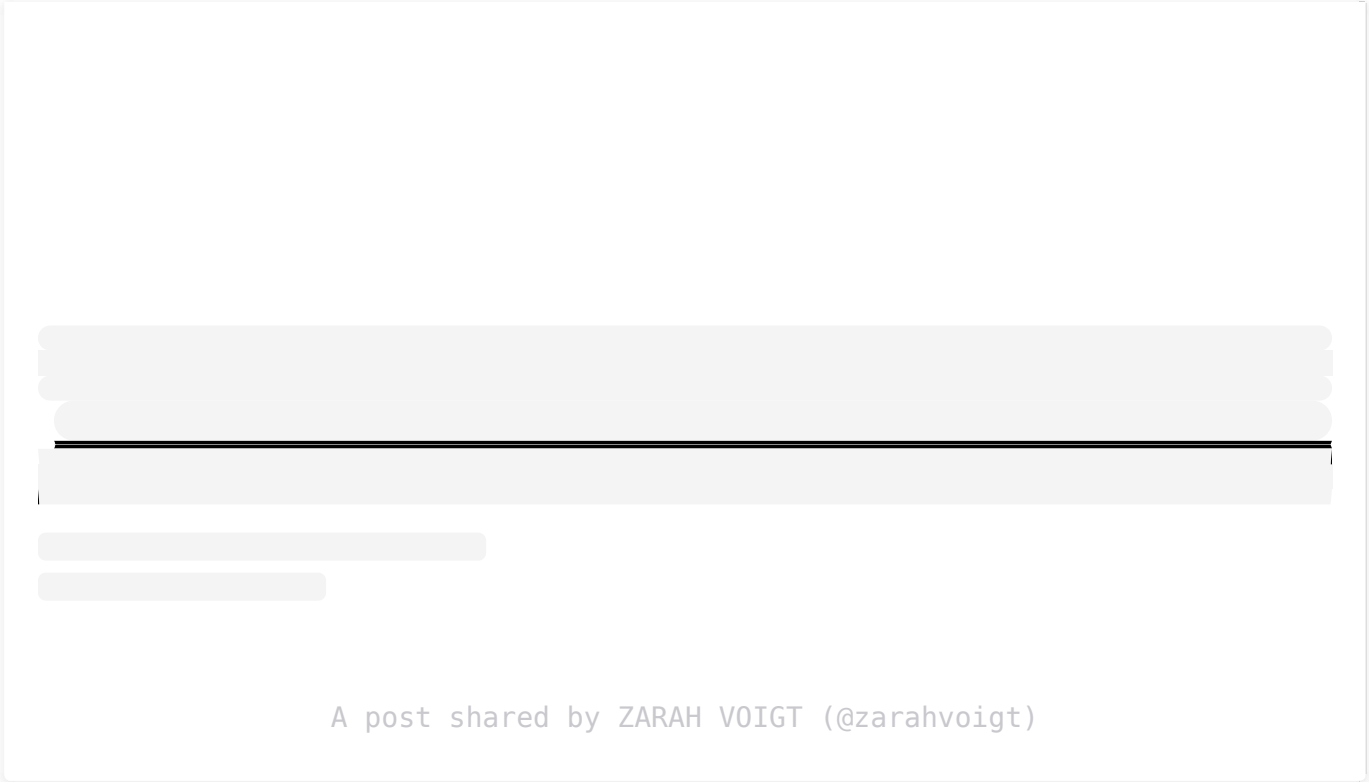
A post shared by LADYFINGERS (@ladyfingerscph)

The company prides itself on creating hand-made pieces. What's more, there's no such thing as a winter or summer collection. Instead, each designer creates pieces whenever they feel inspired.

3. Zarah Voigt

Danish jewellery brand extraordinaire, Zarah Voigt creates pieces that are inspired by fashion and theatre. Everything from her physical shop, to her online presence is designed to match her theatrical, dramatic, and highly inspiring brand image.

View this post on Instagram



A post shared by ZARAH VOIGT (@zarahvoigt)

As you can see from the logo above, Zarah Voigt’s brand is intended to be expressive, sophisticated, and elegant at the same time.

4. Line and Jo

Recognised as trend-setters in the jewellery market, Line and Jo have been creating incredible pieces ever since 2007. This pair designs jewellery that ranges from the elegant, to the raw, and often, they focus on creating pieces that are particularly popular among the Danish.



View this post on Instagram

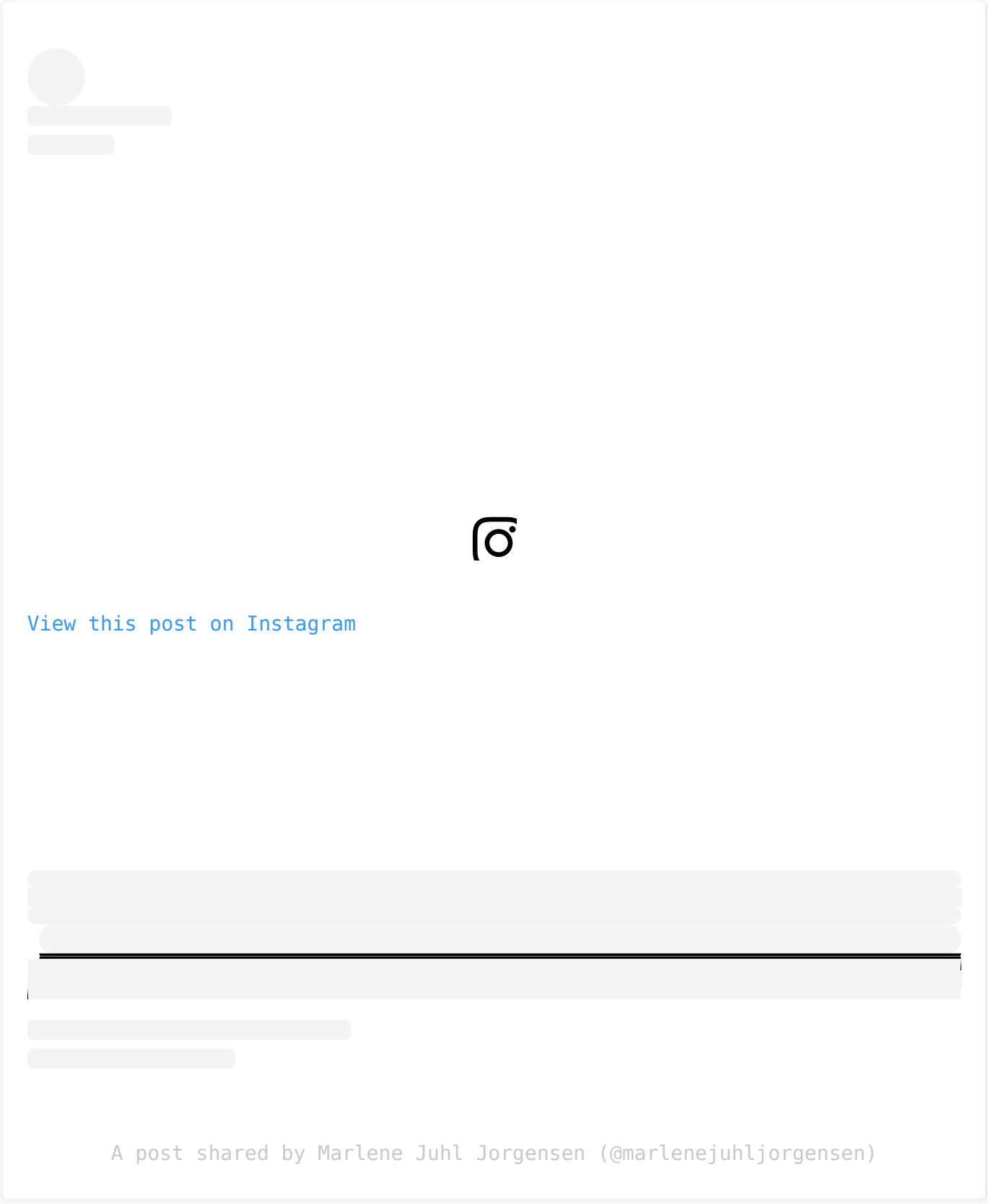
A post shared by LINE&JO (@lineandjo)

As their logo, and their jewellery lines indicate, Line & Jo are all about femininity, and creativity. Like many things in Denmark, these pieces aren’t mass-produced. They’re all unique, interesting, and highly bespoke.

5. Marlene Juhl Jørgensen

Finally, a Danish jewellery brand that offers a surprising blend of modern solutions and traditional designs, Marlene Jul

Jørgensen is yet another example of why Denmark prides itself on brands that aren’t mass-produced.



Though the company defines itself with the “Fine Jewellery”

tagline, it also offers a unique collection of custom-made, limited edition designs that help to identify it as one of the brands that makes the Danish name so easy to connect with bespoke beauty.

What you can learn from these famous Danish brands

Above, you've hopefully gotten a small education into what Danish brands have accomplished over the years. However, it's important to remember that it's more than just beautiful jewellery, simple designs, and unique creations that make these companies so appealing not only to the locals, but to people across the world.

The reason why Denmark has emerged from an underdog with fewer than 6 million people, to a country that's world-renowned for its exceptional quality, is that each of the brands we've mentioned above, plus dozens more, have known how to brand both themselves, and Denmark.

So, what can we learn from Denmark's approach to branding? Well, it comes down to a few basic lessons:

Lesson 1: Simple and classic is best

I mentioned above that the Danish do "minimalist" style perfectly. When it comes to branding, it can be tempting to try and include as many different images and colours as possible in your company media, but the truth is that this can often become overwhelming for your audience.

Ideally, your aim as a brand should be to distil your entire company essence down into a few core values. Once you've done this, you can start to build your brand manifesto and image based on what you want your customers to associate you with.

The more complicated your ideas become, the more likely they

are to go over the heads of your customers. While there's nothing wrong with being clever and witty, simple is usually the best option for branding.

Lesson 2: Add your personality

What's your personality?

What's the personality for your brand?

One of the things that you should have noticed when examining all the fantastic Danish brands we've outlined above, is the fact that these companies all have a distinct character. That character shows through in the colour schemes they use, the items that they create, and even their brand logos.

Danish brands are so relatable because they have incredibly profound personalities. They invite their customers to take a look behind the curtains of their business and see what brought them to wherever they are today.

Give yourself a brand story, and you'll be following the powerful example that Danish brands have given. After all, we fall in love with the people behind the brand, not the logo itself.

Lesson 3: Be bold

While a lot of Danish designers do build upon traditional imagery, heritage, and long-standing classical backgrounds, this doesn't mean that they're not bold enough to experiment and create something new.

Famous Danish brands know that if they want to get a wide audience of clients, and design something that's truly different, they need to ensure that they don't blend into the crowd. The important thing to learn here is that while it's important to check out what the competition are doing sometimes, you should also avoid copying their designs, or

you'll go unnoticed.

A great relationship with your client begins with unique designs. Be bold with your branding, unique, and remain consistent. This way, your customers will become more familiar with your company and what it stands for, and should end up placing a greater value on your services and products.

Lesson 4: Get personal

Today's customers want something that they can connect with, and Danish brands know that.

They understand that people in Denmark love their country. That's why a lot of the brands that come from Denmark infuse their brand stories, manifestos, and even their logos with Danish attributes.

The best way for your brand to take advantage of this idea, is to explore what matters to your target audience, and build on that. If you can delve deep into the beliefs and needs of your audience, and show that you can offer value in every aspect of your brand, then you're sure to have better results.

Remember, people connect with people who are just like themselves. If you use your branding to show your audience just how personable you are, then you'll gain loyal business.

Lesson 5: Be ready to evolve

Finally, it's safe to say that the most famous Danish brands have their place in history. You just need to browse through our list of Danish furniture designers to see that. These are companies that create imagery and concepts that are intended to last a lifetime. However, that doesn't mean they're stuck in the past.

Danish brands know the value of embracing their background, and celebrating their future. They evolve and adapt to their

audience. For you, that might mean conducting a brand audit that might lead to rebranding your entire company when the time is right.

Look at Bang & Olufsen, for example. B&O are famous around the world for their aesthetic appeal. As well as their electronic prowess, they produce visual and audio products that also serve as a centrepiece. Most recently B&O launched the “Play” range and positioned in a way that appeals to younger audiences. In this way, B&O are to build brand loyalty from a relatively early age.

During the recession, when people stopped buying televisions worth tens of thousands of pounds, B&O reinvented itself, and it still managed to maintain its appeal as a company with features that everyone wants to get their hands on. It’s this sense of agility and adaptability that every company can learn from, regardless of size and nationality.

If you enjoyed this article, you might enjoy these ones too:

– Made in Britain: Flying the flag for great British brands

– The art of brand storytelling: What’s your corporate story?

– Why cultivating a healthy corporate culture is good for your brand

– How to write a brand manifesto: Governance for your brand