OPENING PRODUCT DATA FOR A MORE RESPONSIBLE WORLD

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Data on the products we buy is rarely viewed as something to be opened. But in fact, the international standards that make it possible for products to be traded across borders can be used by consumers for their own ends – to help improve information-sharing and choice across the planet. There is currently no public database of this information – but we're working to change that at [Product Open Data](#).

Eugène Delacroix, "la liberté guidant le peuple", 1830 – redesigned by [Jessica Dere](#)

Opening Product Data

When a consumer buys a product he gives power to a manufacturer, enabling it to continue or to extend its activities. A public worldwide product database would allow consumers to get information in real time, by scanning the barcode with a mobile phone, or to publish their opinions about specific products in a way that others can easily access. The consumer would have the tools to make decisions based on their own concerns about health, nutrition, ecology, or human rights, and to make ethical, dietary or value-based purchases.

[GS1](#) is a worldwide organization which assign to a product a unique code that people can see below the barcode (called the [GTIN code](#)). There are billions of product commercialized in the world, and

the full GTIN code list is stored only in GS1 database. The objective of POD (Product Open Data) is to open product data by gathering these key codes, and collecting product information from the manufacturer by creating a new RSS standard around this data (called PSS – Product Simple Syndication).

The POD database contains currently 1.4 million products. The most difficult task is to assign to each product a classification GPC code, which carries information about the particular type of product that it is. GPC codes are an international standard – GS1 has already assigned 10 million of them – but many e-commerce sites have developed their own taxonomies, which makes it difficult to compare product-types across sellers and to find the correct GPC codes online. Other challenges are finding information like the brand, dimensions, and packaging, and lastly but crucially, to guarantee the quality of data. The database and pictures are free to access.

Why is this important?

There are a whole load of reasons why opening product data is a really important step:

- WIth the GTIN Code as a unique identifier, consumers will be able to communicate about a specific product across the world.

- Almost all manufacturers around the world are covered by GS1, which is focused on supply chain. By developing an open database, a new organization with the same power will be created as a counterpoint, but focusing on consumers' right

- Organizations dealing with health, ecology, and human rights will be able to provide their own criteria about products very easily using the GTIN Code.

- Individuals will be able to raise a risk or an alert about a product. A set of rules will have to be defined to avoid buzz triggers with wrong information.

- Marketing and commerce will change a lot because consumers will have new inputs to decide what to buy (e-reputation)

- Smartphone apps and a community will build around product knowledge.

Whether you're interested in open source and open data, the protection of consumers, or the

protection of the environment, we'd love to [hear from you](). Together we can join forces in an innovative project which is good for our planet.

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