

The digital link

GS1 Australia chief global programs officer Sue Schmid talks to **Kim Berry** about how barcode technology can bring global benefits when connected with GS1 Digital Link.

FOR more than 50 years, barcodes have been used to identify products and some of their attributes. Fast forward to today and the GS1 standards are positioned to support the world of the web using the one common standard that users have leveraged for five decades.

The issue then becomes one of real estate on a product's packaging and how much space barcodes occupy, whether it is the point-of-sale identifier, or a QR code directing consumers to a website or an app for allergen information.

GS1 Digital Link is a relatively new standard that can encode all that information and more into one identifier in a web-friendly format.

GS1 Australia chief global

programs officer Sue Schmid says, "GS1 Digital link enables companies to bridge their specific need to engage with their consumers whilst enabling the traditional transaction at retail point-of-sale to take place. It's combining what you have with what you need for the future."

I liken the representation of data in barcodes to fonts. There are hundreds of types of barcodes that encode the same information but do it differently, think of it like one barcode being Arial font and another being Arial in italics. Digital Link is another way of encoding that data, but it gives companies the capability to do more and also connect their customers to more information."



"Digital Link is another way of encoding that data, but it gives companies the capability to do more and also connect their customers to their website seamlessly."

Its major benefit is the opportunity to connect with consumers, while using what is already on the product's existing barcode. Companies have the capability to put information that is both required and desired into one barcode, and the option of adding more data in the future. "It is a key to unlocking

opportunity, and the backward beauty is the space it saves on packaging," Schmid says, adding that it doesn't mean existing barcodes won't work or be available.

Schmid says Digital Link represents GS1 data that already exists in a consumer-friendly way, with different uptake drivers at play. *