

# GS1 Fashion Base Develops Toward Value Chain Digitalization

It is no secret that high-quality product information is fundamental to satisfy the modern-day consumer. This applies no less [in the fashion industry](#), where omnichannel is a standard and consumers expect to switch between online and offline channels seamlessly.

One good example of the ever-increasing connectivity of online and offline is the Connected Retail initiative of Zalando. Since the launch of this project, physical stores that do not have their own online platforms can sell via Zalando and ship orders directly from their stores. Zalando also [plans to offer click & collect options to further strengthen their bond with brick and mortar retail](#).

## GS1 Fashion Base – seamless product information exchange

This trend undoubtedly calls for a closer collaboration throughout the supply chain. Fast exchange of information is vital because of the fast-moving nature of the industry. In 2018, [Icecat teamed up with GS1](#) to facilitate the data exchange between manufacturers and retailers. And like that, GS1 Fashion Base was born. Vera Verhoeven, the project leader from GS1, explains how the platform has developed since its launch in this interview.

**GS1 Fashion Base is a joint project between GS1 and Icecat. What does each**

## **one of these two parties bring to the project?**

To achieve the goal of a standardized database of product data for fashion e-commerce and retail, the collaboration of these two organizations makes perfect sense. GS1 plays the role of authority for international standards, while Icecat is an established provider of a flexible content platform that has proven itself across many product categories worldwide.

## **Can you highlight the main benefits of the platform?**

The benefits of a centralized product database are apparent in many different retail sectors. Since a shared database limits manual processing, the likelihood of error is significantly smaller. Therefore, the usage of one source improves data quality. GS1 uses a global standard known as Global Product Classification. The way GS1 Fashion Base is organized – both functionally and technically – is so all-encompassing and flexible that anyone should be able to easily use the standard.

For brands, the main advantage is the elimination of hassle with processing multiple excel sheets for various customers. Instead, they easily upload data from their own system just one time.

A significant benefit for retailers is the availability of up-to-date product content at any stage of the product life cycle. Furthermore, GS1 Fashion Base ensures standardized content in a single feed from all suppliers. The standardized information, including rich content and images, is ready to be applied immediately after release, enabling the retailers to add many products quickly. In the [GS1 Fashion Base whitepaper](#), there is a detailed overview of benefits based on retailer type.

## **How did the project develop since its launch in 2018?**

The fashion sector has been hit hard by the corona crisis. Many stores piled up a large stock due to the enforced closures. Especially physical stores are having a hard time, but online sales are also difficult. The fact that product data has become more important than ever is a 'no-brainer.' Working together in the chain to solve the most urgent problems is, of course, now the main goal. For those companies that also dare and can think ahead, the following applies: work together to improve product data.

## **How many SKUs are in the GS1 Fashion Base?**

At the moment we have about 60,000 GTINs (EANs) in GS1 Fashion Base.

## **Which content is key for brands and retailers to syndicate?**

The decision on the type of product information exchanged via GS1 Fashion Base and the standards used has been made in collaboration with some of the top players in the Dutch fashion industry. In order to ensure data is suitable for use by all users and product categories, there are concrete specifications for data such as product photos and videos. This standard eliminates the need for individual agreements on which data, images, and related information are shared.

When a brand starts, we focus on the core attributes. Product name, description, marketing text, and category specification as well the subcategory, are essential. We also include the basics like gender, consumer life stage, as well as color and size data. When the data runs smoothly, we go to phase two. Examples are sleeve length type, garment length type,

collar/neckline type, closure type. For shoes, these could, for example, include the last type or sole type. New this year is the possibility to add sustainability data. For example, a dropdown with all certificates.

## **How big is the role of rich content in the fashion industry?**

For those who have a webshop or sell through an online platform, rich content is crucial. If the brand owner enters data, the whole chain can benefit from the data. Double data entry will become obsolete. The consumer will search on special features, find items more easily, and returns will decrease, so everybody wins.

## **How are the colors and sizes of products standardized in the GS1 Fashion Base?**

GS1 Fashion Base is based on the international standard for sizing and colors designed in the early 1960s by the National Retail Federation (NRF). In 2020, GS1 US acquired the National Retail Federation (NRF) Color and Size Code tables.

## **What is next for GS1 Fashion Base?**

Introducing the use of GS1 Fashion Base was the first step towards value chain digitalization and laying a firm base for the future. Even more standardized product information will be added, for example, regarding product sustainability. Furthermore, the project started in the Netherlands, but it is ready to roll out internationally thanks to Icecat's global network and the platform's compliance with international GS1 standards.