

## Understanding the Role of Product Identifiers in SEO

When browsing products on an ecommerce store, you might have noticed a series of unusual numbers—long strings of digits that appear to have no purpose. However, these numbers are quite important and are most likely the product GTIN or SKU numbers.

In this guide, we explore the significance of product identifier numbers, what they represent, the various types available, and how they are crucial for your ecommerce SEO.

### Product Identifiers - A Basic Definition

Imagine your company has hundreds of products, some of which are just minor variations of the main items. How do you easily differentiate between these products? How can customers find exactly what they are looking for amidst so much variety?

This is where product identifiers come into play. Product identifiers assign a unique number to each product, making it easy to distinguish one from another. There is no confusion—Product X has Product Identifier Y, setting it apart from Product Z.

The universal product identifier is the GTIN, which stands for Global Trade Item Number. This global standard, developed by the international organization GS1, ensures each product has a unique code typically ranging from 8 to 14 numbers.

Regional GTINs include:

- **Europe:** EAN – European Article Number
- **North America:** UPC – Universal Product Codes
- **Japan:** JAN – Japanese Article Number

In addition to GTINs, there are other types of product identifiers used internally, with the SKU being the most common. We'll delve into the details of SKUs in the following section

### The Importance of Product Identifiers for Your eCommerce Store

Now that we understand GTINs as unique reference numbers for products, varying by geographical location, why should they matter to you? How can these identifiers benefit your eCommerce store and boost your SEO?

## Helping Customers Find Specific Products

From a customer's perspective, product identifier numbers provide specificity and help them find exactly what they want.

Many of us have experienced this: you see a product in a store but decide not to buy it immediately. Instead, you note the product identifier, such as the SKU, and search for it online to find a better deal. An SKU or GTIN ensures customers get the exact product they're looking for.

## Enhancing Google's Understanding of Your Products

Google recommends the use of product identifiers, and we all know that following Google's advice is wise!

SKUs and GTINs help Google better understand your products, categorize them, and distinguish them from your other offerings. This is particularly important for companies with extensive product libraries, as it makes the information easier to manage and display.

## Ensuring Your Products Appear in Google Shopping Feeds

If you submit a product to Google Shopping without a GTIN, you'll typically receive a warning, something you want to avoid. Without a GTIN, your product is less likely to appear in Google Shopping feeds and may even be penalized, making GTIN an important aspect of [product page SEO](#).

However, not every product requires a GTIN. Products sold globally or those requiring barcode scanning typically need a GTIN. In contrast, bespoke items like handmade or single-production pieces may not.

An [SEO agency specializing in ecommerce websites](#) can help determine whether you need a GTIN and guide you on how to obtain one.

## SKU vs GTIN - Understanding the Distinction

While we've focused on the GTIN identifier, it's important to also consider the SKU. The SKU, or Stock Keeping Unit, is a unique product identifier used internally by companies to easily distinguish between products and manage inventory.

GTINs, such as UPCs, remain the same globally. For instance, two companies selling the same product would use the same UPC. However, they would each have a different SKU, which is used internally.

For a better understanding, let's look at the Lego store. Each Lego building set has an SKU or item number, which is an internal product identifier. For instance, the Lego Harry Potter Hogwarts Castle and Grounds is identified with the SKU #76419.. It also has a GTIN of

5702017413228, which stays the same regardless of the store. In contrast, if you checked this product on different toy retailers like Smyths or Argos, they would have their own SKU along with the GTIN and the official Lego SKU!

### **Boosting SEO and Product Searchability with Identifiers**

Product identifiers are crucial not only for SEO but also for making your products easier to search for and distinguish. Using GTINs ensures your products appear in Google Shopping results.

Additionally, internal SKU numbers help manage inventory and enable customers to find specific products without confusion.



tomatotree  
digital