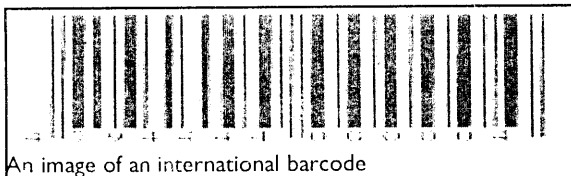


Importance of Obtaining an International Barcode

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Most of the large supermarket chains today require all the suppliers to have their products bar-coded. In countries like United States and Europe most of the importers today prefer to buy bar-coded products. A barcode is a machine-readable symbol that consists a series of bars and spaces printed in defined ratios. When the customer buys a certain product in supermarket and brings it to counter for payment, the cashier will scan the barcodes on the products and all the details with regard to that product (E.g. Brand name, price, weight) will immediately appear on the computer.



An image of an international barcode

Even though you will see barcodes are being used on most of the things (E.g. products, billing, etc.) every barcode is not an international barcode. The widely accepted and recognized barcode is a barcode that is printed in compliance with the international barcode standards of GSI or Global Standard One. GSI, headquartered in Brussels, Belgium is the accredited organization to operate the barcode system around the world. According to the standards imposed by GSI, an international barcode must contain 13 digits. Out of these thirteen digits, first three digits will represent the country code of the member countries of the GSI network. Sri Lanka is accredited and recognized by the country prefix "479". Therefore the CCC holds the sole franchise to issue barcodes with the country prefix of "479". (E.g. "888" Singapore, "471" Taiwan, etc.)

In Sri Lanka, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce is the sole authorized body to operate the GSI Standard system. Any company or exporter who wishes to obtain a barcode must register with GSI Sri Lanka of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

When a certain company comes and register with GSI Sri Lanka to obtain a barcode that company will be given an international company ID and that company's barcode number will begin with the country prefix "479" followed by the international company ID number.

It is very advantageous for a company to obtain an international barcode in several aspects. When a certain company possesses an international barcode that company and its products are identifiable around the world. For an instance, when a product barcode is inserted in to the computer, it will immediately give all the details about the company (company name, registered address, contact details, etc.) and its product (price, flavor, date of manufacture and expiry, contents, etc.) It is easier for foreign companies to search about your company, its products and it will also give your company an international recognition as an international barcode can only be obtained by a legally registered company. And in some countries custom offices are linked to the international barcode system. In such a country, it will be easier to clear the goods from the customs because custom officials will be able to check identity of a certain product by scanning the barcode.

A barcode appearing on a product also acts as a standard certificate. Now a days, barcodes are considered an international standard. Having an international barcode on a product says that product complies by the international supply chain standards system of the global standard organization. By obtaining an international barcode your products become more competitive internationally. Most of the foreign buyers today look for barcoded products and barcodes are mandatory for the suppliers of world's reputed retail gains such as USA's Wal-Mark, Britain's Tesco, France's Carrefour, Etc.

Any Sri Lankan company that wishes to register for international barcodes must register with the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce's GSI Sri Lanka. And a company that wishes to obtain an international barcode must be a legally registered company. Recently CCC has started a promotional campaign to promote international barcodes among Sri Lankan companies. There is an increased threat for Sri Lankan companies to lose out in the international market due to not having barcodes.