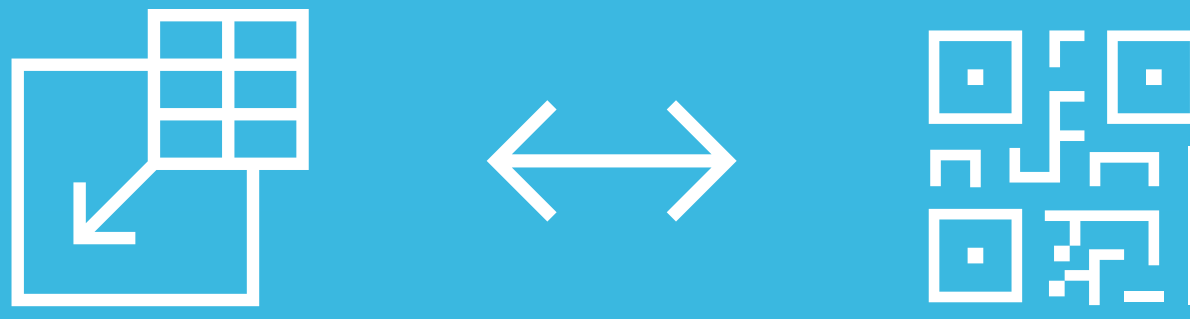# When to Use Digital Watermarks and QR Codes

Digital watermarks and **QR codes** are revolutionizing how brands connect with their products and consumers. While they are both beneficial for brands, depending on your needs one may be better than the other.

Digital Watermarks

A digital watermark is a secure, covert digital tag, or data carrier, that can be applied to products, packaging, labels, digital images, audio, or video files.

QR Codes

A quick response (QR) code is a machine-readable code with an array of black-and-white squares that contains information about the product it is attached to.

Product Digitization

Digital watermarks connect a physical or digital product to a digital twin in the cloud, unlocking new insights for brands into the product journey.

QR codes applied on packaging or labels provide brands with first-party data from a direct communications channel with consumers, delivering greater capabilities for products.

Product Authenticity

Covert, inimitable, and easily detected by numerous systems and devices, digital watermarks are the best way to help brands protect products from counterfeiting, verify authenticity, and potentially uncover diversion.
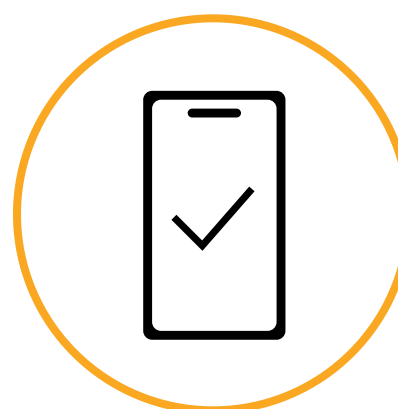
QR codes are not covert like digital watermarks, making them less useful for security applications. However, serialized QR codes can be an effective additional method for multifactor authentication.

Consumer Engagement

While digital watermarks are uniquely versatile, the visual covertness makes them less intuitive for consumers to scan than QR codes.

Consumers are already primed to scan QR codes for information, and most camera apps can natively scan them. Digimarc Engage leverages QR codes for fast, effective, and interactive communications connecting brands and consumers.

Recycling

Digital watermarks can be applied to both a product's label and the plastic substrate of packaging, even if the surface is irregular. They have also proven to boost accuracy and performance in recycling facilities.*

QR codes are not as durable, versatile, or effective as digital watermarks for recycling facilities, but can be used to educate consumers on sustainability practices and recycling information.

Retail

Digital watermarks can carry GTIN, UPC, and other information, enabling detection at checkout and supporting modern frictionless retail experiences.

Futureproof your products for GS1 Sunrise 2027 with checkout compatible 2D codes and consumer engagement capabilities.

From protecting products and engaging consumers to improving recyclability, Digimarc has a full product digitization suite to help your brand achieve its goals. Schedule a free consultation with Digimarc to see whether watermarks or QR codes are right for your business.