

India Sourcing Case Studies From Apple, Walmart, IKEA and Smaller Buyers



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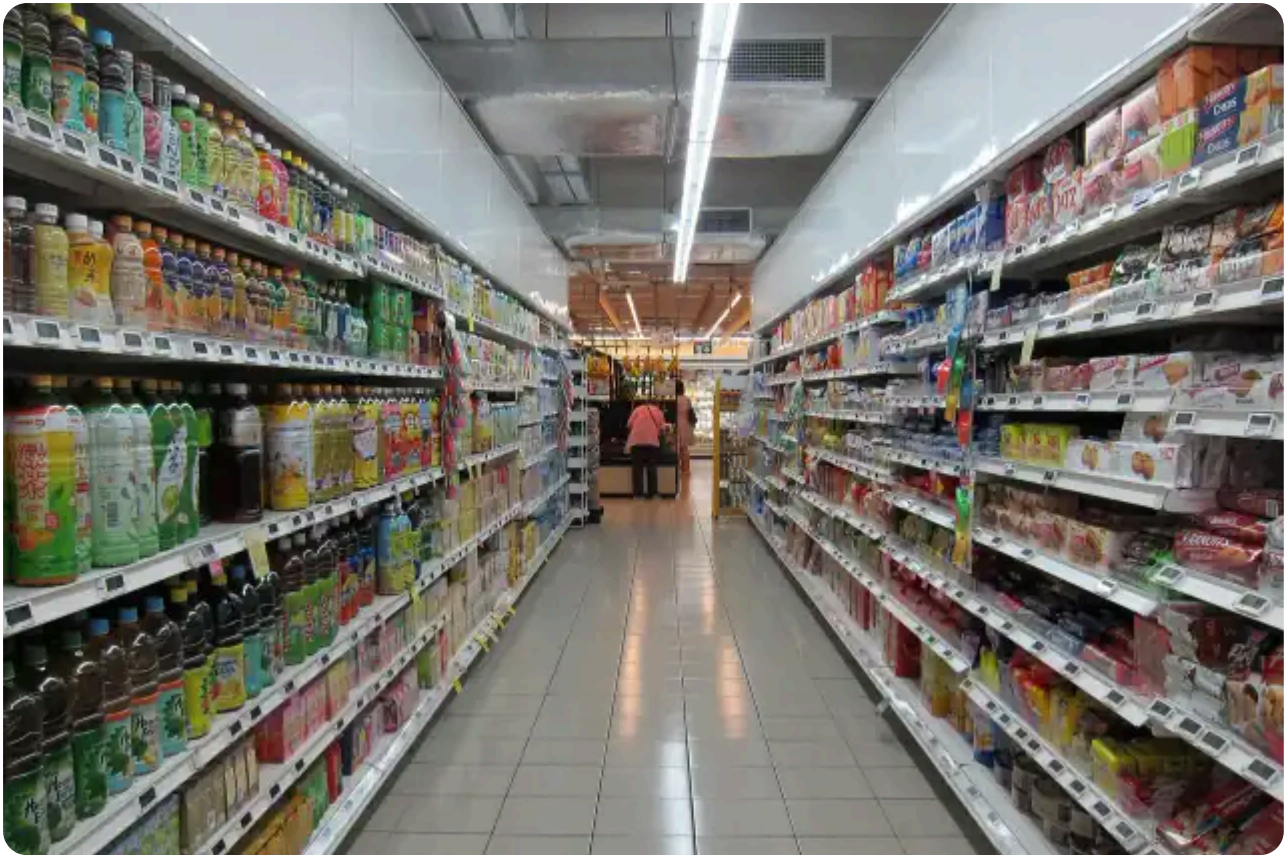
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Four real, cited cases of sourcing from India: Apple, Walmart, IKEA and experienced OEM buyers. Each used a different strategy, and all of them treated India as a long-term build rather than a one-order shop, which a smaller buyer can copy at its own scale.

The Short Version

- Apple moved a proven process into India through contract makers it already used, Foxconn and Tata companies.
- Walmart grew small suppliers through its Vriddhi programme rather than waiting for them to become export-ready.
- IKEA buys from India through just 48 suppliers, invests in them and checks them with its own and third-party auditors.
- The OEM buyers who say India worked nearly all kept someone on the ground through sampling, production and the next order.

In December 2020, Walmart promised to triple what it buys from India to US\$10 billion a year by 2027 ([Walmart, Dec 2020](#)). That's a public, dated promise from the world's biggest retailer, and a good place to start if you want to know how serious buyers actually go about India. In this post I'll look at four real cases, what each company did, and what you can borrow if you're a lot smaller than they are.



Every case here comes from company statements, filings, government figures or first-hand buyer accounts, and I've left out the ones I couldn't verify. That's also my honest caveat - big companies publish their wins and not their mistakes, so the corporate cases tell you the strategy while the forum accounts tell you where it hurts.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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- 01 **Apple went from joining India's phone incentive scheme in 2021-22 to more than US\$50 billion of iPhone exports by December 2025.** It did it through contract makers it already used, in five assembly plants, three run by Tata companies and two by Foxconn. *(India's IT minister via TrendForce, Jan 2026)*
- 02 **IKEA buys about €315 million a year from India through just 48 suppliers.** It invests in their technology and sets up new factories with them, and checks them

with around 80 of its own auditors plus third parties. ([IKEA India](#))

- 03 **The buyers who say India worked for them nearly all had someone on the ground.** A buyer with 20 years in OEM sourcing put it as "a foot on the ground (small local team that belongs to you)". ([r/procurement, 2026](#))
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What we don't know yet

- Whether Walmart has reached US\$10 billion a year. Its public statements from February 2024 and June 2025 both give only the cumulative "more than US\$30 billion".
- Published failures. No company we found has filed a detailed account of an India sourcing project that didn't work.

1. Apple Brought the Makers It Already Trusted

Apple's India story is the one everybody quotes, and the numbers really are big. Apple joined India's production-linked incentive scheme for phones in 2021–22, and by December 2025 more than US\$50 billion of iPhones had been exported from India, according to India's IT minister ([TrendForce, Jan 2026, Reported](#)). About US\$16 billion of that shipped in just the nine months to December 2025 (same source).

Apple didn't go hunting for new Indian suppliers from scratch. Its assembly in India runs through five plants – two run by Foxconn, its long-standing contract maker, and three by Tata group companies – with around 45 component suppliers behind them (same source, Reported). Put simply, Apple moved a proven process into India with makers who already knew its standards, and it used a government incentive to help pay for the move.

So what can a small buyer borrow? Not the scale, obviously, but the principle travels well. If you're moving a product from China (the steps are in [moving manufacturing from China to India](#)) then ask your current maker whether they, or a partner, already produce in India. Treat India's incentives as a sign of where capacity is being built, which the [why India](#) page covers category by category.

The other lesson is less flattering. India assembles more than it makes parts, even for Apple, so check where your components will come from.

2. Walmart Built Its Supplier Base Instead of Just Buying

Walmart's December 2020 commitment was to go from about US\$3 billion of exports from India a year to US\$10 billion by 2027, across food, medicines, apparel, homeware, jewellery and hard goods ([Walmart, Dec 2020](#)). The plan leaned on three things – its global sourcing office in Bengaluru, Flipkart's seller programme, and a supplier development programme for small firms called Vriddhi.

The development work is the bit I find most interesting. By June 2025 Walmart said Vriddhi had trained more than 70,000 small and medium businesses, with another 100,000 planned by 2028 ([Walmart, Jun 2025](#)). In February 2024 it ran a growth summit with suppliers from 24 states and union territories, and more than 80% of them were invited to the next stage ([Walmart, Feb 2024](#)).

Why would the world's biggest retailer pay to teach small firms how to export? Because India's makers are capable but often not export-ready on the paperwork, the compliance, the packaging and the testing for each market, and Walmart decided it was cheaper to grow suppliers than to wait for them.

You can't run a training programme, but you can run the small version. Send a clear spec, explain your market's rules and test limits, and be patient through the first order. A maker who learns your standards on order one is worth far more to you on order five.



3. IKEA Kept Few Suppliers and Went Deep

IKEA does almost the opposite of spreading orders around. It says it buys about €315 million a year from India through 48 suppliers, which support more than 45,000 direct workers and roughly 400,000 in the wider supply chain ([IKEA India](#), Supplier-stated). It invests in modern manufacturing technology at those suppliers and sets up new factories with them (same source).

It also checks them, and hard. Every IKEA supplier signs up to its IWAY code on child labour, wages, safety and environment, and IKEA says around 80 of its own auditors plus independent third-party auditors enforce it (same source). Its handmade rugs, a category where India leads the world, sit under the same rules ([IKEA, handmade rugs](#)).

The lesson I'd take from IKEA is focus. For a small buyer that means picking two or three makers rather than ten, writing down the standards you expect,

and paying for independent inspection instead of trusting a supplier's photos. How to run those checks is on [quality control in India](#).

4. Experienced OEM Buyers Kept Someone on the Ground

The corporate cases tell you the strategy, and the forums tell you what it feels like. In a 2026 thread on buying from India, procurement people with long careers kept landing on the same answer. One, with 20 years of OEM buying, said what worked was "having a foot on the ground (small local team that belongs to you)" ([r/procurement, 2026](#)). Another said, "What helped the most is we had someone based out of there finding and vetting suppliers who knew the area" ([r/procurement, 2026](#)).

The flip side came from a manufacturing buyer - "Only time we got things right from India was when we sent my Indian colleague to the factory". In the same thread, quality slipped again "the moment he left India" ([r/manufacturing, 2025](#)). An India-based founder had the same experience from the other side: "In India, I personally visited the factories & still could not get the job done" ([Hacker News, 2023](#)).



That's the most consistent finding in all of our forum research. One visit won't do it, and presence has to keep going through sampling, production and the next order. Apple has Foxconn's engineers, Walmart has an office in Bengaluru and IKEA has its auditors.

A small buyer needs a version of the same thing (see [can you open a buying office in India](#)), and that's what [SourcingSync](#) is for - people in India who stay with the order after you fly home.

5. What the Four Cases Have in Common

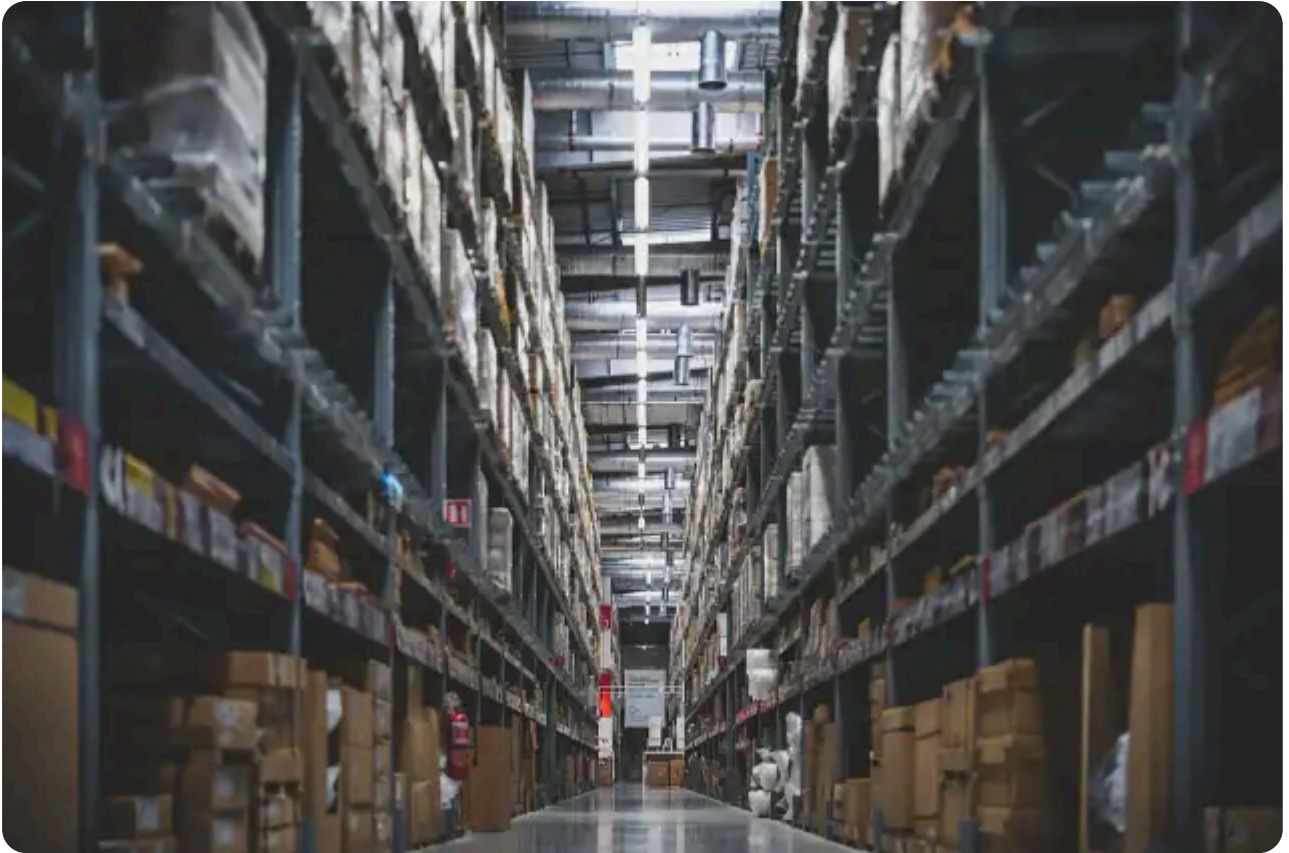
Put them side by side and one pattern runs through all four -

Buyer	What they did	What a small buyer can borrow
Apple	Moved a proven process into India with makers who already knew its standards	Ask your current maker whether they or a partner already produce in India
Walmart	Trained small suppliers to become export-ready	Send a clear spec, explain your market's rules and be patient through order one
IKEA	Few suppliers, known well, checked independently	Pick two or three makers and pay for independent inspection
OEM buyers	Kept someone on the ground	Keep presence going through sampling, production and the next order

None of these buyers treated India as a place to shop for one order. Apple moved a process, Walmart built suppliers, IKEA went deep with a few and the OEM buyers kept someone there. The same idea sits behind why India rewards buyers who build over years and the China plus one guide.

Walmart's 2027 deadline is a year away as I write, and it hasn't said publicly whether it's hit US\$10 billion a year. I'll update this post when it does.

Whatever the number turns out to be, the way it went about it – growing the makers rather than just buying from them – is the part worth copying.



One gap to log - we looked for a fifth case, a small or mid-size importer with a documented India move and its numbers, and didn't find one we could verify. If you're that importer and happy to be quoted, write to team@sourcingfrom.com.