

Why 'Indian Manufacturers' Email You After Your First Import

Yash Khatri

Founder, SourcingFrom

Updated 12 Oct 2026 6 min read

Most "Indian manufacturer" emails after a first import come from agents and traders who found your company in shipment data, not from factories. US sea manifests are public and importer lists take minutes to build. The post shows where the trail starts and how to tell a cold pitch from a real maker.

Key takeaways

- US sea manifests are public, and trade-data platforms let anyone filter importers by product.
- Outside the US, the trail is usually fair lists, directory enquiries and marketplace buying requests.
- A pitch that offers everything, rushes to WhatsApp and a quote, or won't give a GST number is a list-worker's tell.
- A US importer can ask Customs to keep its name off future manifests under 19 CFR 103.31.
- A cold email is not a scam on its own, but nobody vetted the sender.

Most of those emails come from people who found your company in shipment data, not from factories who heard good things about you. If you import into the US by sea, your name and the product can sit on a public bill of lading record, and Indian export agents pull lists of importers from trade-data platforms by product code. The sender is usually a sales agent or trader working that list.



That's the plain answer. This post shows where the trail starts, what the senders are actually doing, and how to sort the one useful message from the forty you'll delete. One caveat first - I'm talking mostly about US sea imports, because that's the market where shipment records are public. If you buy into Australia, the UK, the UAE or the EU, the cold emails still come, but they come from different lists.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

powered by [Kirnova](#) – the intelligence company

- 01 US sea manifests are public, and India-origin shipments show the US consignee on a large share of them.** Depending on the product, the consignee name was missing on 10.5% to 85.4% of India-origin bills we read, which means it was visible on the rest. *(Our read of US bill-of-lading records as published by ImportYeti, 23 Sep 2026 · Verified count)*
-

02 Indian export agents say openly that importer lists take minutes to build. "You can literally find 200 importers of your product in 5 minutes on any trade data platform." (*r/exportersindia, India export agent, Aug 2026*)

03 US importers can ask to keep their name off the published manifest under 19 CFR 103.31. (*US Code of Federal Regulations*)

What we don't know yet

- What share of cold "manufacturer" emails come from real factories rather than agents. Nobody publishes it, and we haven't measured it.

1. Where Did They Get My Name?

When a container lands in the US, the carrier files a manifest with US Customs. Those manifest records are public, and several commercial platforms clean them up and sell or show them by product, shipper and consignee. In September 2026 we read the public pages for 21 Indian product codes on one of those platforms, and the US buyer's name sat right there on many of the bills (our read of US bill-of-lading records, as published by ImportYeti).



So the day your first container clears, you become a row in a database. Your company name, sometimes your address, the product description and the port. Anyone selling into your category can filter for it.

An Indian export agent described exactly this on a forum in August 2026 – "you can literally find 200 importers of your product in 5 minutes on any trade data platform" ([r/exportersindia, 2026](#)). He was giving advice to other Indian exporters on how to find buyers. That's you he's talking about.

2. Why Doesn't This Happen In My Country?

Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the UAE and the EU don't publish shipment-level import records the way the US does. That doesn't mean you're invisible. Your company still shows up in trade-fair visitor lists, directory enquiries, LinkedIn, marketplace RFQs and your own website.

So if you're a Melbourne or Manchester importer getting the same emails, the trail is probably an enquiry you posted somewhere, or a fair you registered for. Did you post a buying request on a B2B marketplace last year? That alone can keep the emails coming for a long time.

3. Who Is Actually Writing To Me?

Mostly sales agents, merchant exporters and small trading firms. Some are honest intermediaries who place orders with real makers and answer for the quality. Some are students or tiny start-ups with an export code and no stock, who plan to buy the goods after your advance arrives. A Mumbai spice start-up said as much in public in 2026 - "We will only procure bulk inventory after securing a 30% to 50% advance from the buyer" ([r/exportersindia, 2026](#)).

I want to be fair here. A merchant exporter is a normal way to buy from India, and plenty of Western retailers buy exactly that way. The problem isn't that the sender is a trader. The problem is a trader who calls himself the factory, because then your audit, your sample and your price talk all go to the wrong desk. We cover that trade-off properly in [manufacturer vs trading company](#).

Real factories do cold-email too, but less than you'd think. Many good Indian makers barely exist online and win customers through fairs and references. One Indian B2B manufacturer said in 2023 - "Now we mostly acquire new customers through trade shows, or references" ([r/india, 2023](#)). So an inbox full of "manufacturers" tells you more about who works lists than about who runs machines. The same noise distorts online reviews, as [why online reviews mislead](#) shows.

4. How Do I Tell A Cold Pitch From A Maker?

You don't need to open a single attachment. Read the email for these tells -

It names your product, but not your spec. A list-worker knows your HS code and nothing else. A maker who actually looked at you will mention the fabric, the finish or the size range, because that's what they care about.

It offers everything. "Garments, home textiles, leather goods, spices and handicrafts" in one signature is a trading house, not a factory. Real makers are narrow. Of the 15 Indian maker profiles we read in US shipping data, 13 had one product chapter at 57% or more of their shipments (our count of US bill-of-lading records, Sep 2026).

It moves fast to WhatsApp and a quote. A US brand owner who got these messages in 2022 said the sender "wanted my Whatsapp and came up with a quote way too quick without explaining the costs behind everything" ([r/streetwearstartup, 2022](#), an older post). A real costing takes a spec and a few questions.

It won't give a GST number. Every Indian exporter of goods has one. Ask for it, and for the factory address. If the answer is a dodge, you've learned enough. If you get both, take ten minutes with [what an Indian GST number tells you](#).

5. Can I Make It Stop?

Partly. A US importer can ask Customs to keep its name and address off the published manifest under 19 CFR 103.31, and many brands do. Your customs broker can file it for you. It only works going forward, so older shipments stay in the databases.

Is it worth it? If you're a small brand with a product competitors would love to copy, yes, I'd file it. If you're happy to hear from new suppliers, leave it and use a filter rule instead. Just know that the confidentiality also hides you from honest makers looking for buyers like you, which is a small loss but a real one.

6. Should I Ever Reply?

Sure, to the ones that pass the tells above. A cold email isn't a scam on its own, and now and then one turns out to be a good mid-sized maker with a sales team. Treat it like any lead. Ask who makes it, who answers for quality, and whose name goes on the commercial invoice. Then run the checks on [how to check an Indian supplier](#).

What you shouldn't do is treat the email as a sign of vetting. Nobody vetted that sender. They found you in a spreadsheet. If you'd rather have someone find and check the actual factory for you, [SourcingSync](#) does that on the ground.

The short version - your first import put you on a list, and the list is being worked. That's annoying, but it's also proof your category has sellers queuing up, and you get to pick.

Questions Buyers Ask

Are the "manufacturers" emailing me scammers? ^

Mostly no. Most are agents and traders working importer lists. Some will be fine to buy from, as long as they tell you who makes the goods.

Does confidential filing remove me from ImportYeti and similar sites? v

I don't import into the US. Why am I still getting these? v

Is there a list of real Indian factories I can trust instead? v