

# The Ultimate Guide to Global Sources Hong Kong Exhibitions

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## About the Author

I am Ashish Monga, founder of [IMEX SOURCING SERVICES](#).

I came to China six years ago to start my sourcing services & quality-control Company. I'd been on the other side of the business, living in the UK where I was importing various products from China and India & selling via both offline & online channels.



This experience prompted me to start my company here in China, so I could address many of the issues and obstacles I'd encountered as an importer. I've put together a fully bilingual Chinese team with years of experience in sourcing, factory manufacturing, and international business as well as industry specific experience of several key industries. We serve customers worldwide, from medium to large Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) sellers to multinationals with seven-figure, multiple-container sourcing budgets.

I've had an amazing experience here in China, a country bursting with opportunities. My business has given me and my team the chance to work with interesting clients from all corners of the world, especially the UK, US, Canada & Australia.

Boredom? Not in this market. Never. We may be sourcing world-class kayaks on Monday, working with a startup company developing new technology products on Tuesday and helping a builder source fittings for a 50-story office building in London on Wednesday.

I've travelled throughout China visiting factories of all sizes. It presents a perfect opportunity to study their processes and build relationships. I've come to understand their challenges and help them understand my clients' as well, trying to bridge the "Gap" which is often the root cause of most quality problems that arise when sourcing from China.

It's a give-and-take interaction that ultimately helps both sides understand each other's needs. Ultimately, it's about improving communications and building relationships so everyone wins.

This travel and deep dive into Chinese manufacturing and business practices has prompted me to build my company on systems and processes that help my clients minimize costs, manage risk, and maximize quality. In this way, they can take advantage of China's massive export capability & resources, while streamlining and improving their supply chain.

Clients tell me stories and share their issues either during our interactions on the projects we work on or during the [consultation](#) work I do.

I regularly read online about the many pitfalls importers face when doing business in China and find the same issues repeated over and over. Perhaps you face the same problems: corruption, quality and ethics, transparency and honesty, and scams and fraud.

You're not alone. Anyone wanting to succeed in China has to deal with these potential issues. But once you figure out how to maneuver through this minefield, you open the door to unlimited business opportunity.

I love to share the lessons and experiences I, and my clients, have learned in dealing with Chinese factories, and importing and exporting generally from China. This is why I started [TheSourcingBlog.com](http://TheSourcingBlog.com), hoping that my experiences could help importers navigate the "China Importing" landscape.

## Why Should I be Writing This Book?

I still remember the first time I came to China. I used to work in Beijing and was looking to set up a business that had something to do with international trade but that's pretty much all I knew. I had no clear plan for my business model or an understanding of what value I could offer.

What I did know was that the best way to look for answers and inspiration would be by attending a lot of trade fairs. Global Sources show & Canton Fair were some of the first ones I attended because they are by far the biggest and strategically timed in a way that with the right planning visitors can attend both of them in a single visit.

So I packed my bag and flew down to Guangzhou for a few days to attend the Canton Fair & at the same time took the 2 hour train from Guangzhou to Hong Kong to attend the Global Sources show multiple times to make sure I could catch all three phases of both the fairs.

This was a real eye-opening experience for me & I went back with tons of inspiration and some knowledge.

Fast forward a few months from these visits. I moved to Guangzhou and have since attended both these trade shows on countless occasions. At my company, [IMEX Sourcing Services](#), we don't really use the fairs so much for sourcing but they are a great source of information about how the market is changing & the general mood of the market.

Talking to importers at the fair and occasionally accompanying clients is an experience I always treasure as due to the physical distances, I hardly get much face-time with clients.

I have shared everything I had to share about the [Canton Fair in an eBook](#) earlier, that you can [find here](#), so it was high time I did one for my other favorite sourcing fair, i.e. the Global Sources Hong Kong Exhibition and hence this eBook.

I hope this eBook can serve as a valuable resource for all things "Global Sources". I address the basic questions that any visitor to the fair would have: travelling to the fair, hotels, food, etc. and then some tips & tactics on finding the right suppliers, differentiating between factories & traders so you can get maximum value out of your visit & can minimize the (unpleasant) surprises that come with a "learn as you go" approach.

I also touch open the various facets of the Global Sources B2B portal and how it integrates with the fair.

When I first visited the fair, I was totally unprepared, and the suppliers could smell that from a distance. It showed up in how seriously they took me (or not), as well as the price quotes they gave me.

I also had to shut down my mailbox 30 days after the fair had ended due to the constant bombardment of emails from suppliers I met, suppliers I did not meet and their relatives due to not knowing when to hand out my business card & when not to do so.

Over the years I learnt several lessons on how to navigate these Trade Fairs. More importantly, I learnt how to come across as a serious prospect to suppliers and how to discuss products and pricing in a way that best represents a buyer's interest. This eBook is a culmination of those experiences and resources. I hope it will cut down the learning curve for new importers as well as provide experienced importers with some new tools & insights.

A lot of the information shared here can be applied to most trade fairs in China. However, the focus of this book would be the Global Sources Exhibition, and a lot of the information shared here will be specific to this fair only.

If you find value from this book, have questions about the Global Sources show that have not been answered here or would just like to share your own experience of the fair, please do leave your comments on the [original blog post at this link](#).

## Chapter 1: What is the Global Sources Exhibition?

Global Sources was one of the earliest players in the China B2B sourcing game having being founded in 1970. Being a NASDAQ listed company they are currently one of the biggest players in the industry and their operations cover exhibitions, B2B portals, print & electronic publications as well as several other initiatives geared towards manufacturers, importers around the globe & increasingly inventors & other players in the supply chain.

Global Sources trade shows are held every April and October at AsiaWorld-Expo in Hong Kong. The shows welcome volume buyers from some 200 countries who come to visit manufacturers and other suppliers from China and throughout Asia. Just to give you an idea of the scale of the fair, in Oct 2015, 5,800 booths of different suppliers across the eight days of the show participated in the fair & it attracted 84,632 visitors.



The Exhibition is divided into three phases based on industry groupings, i.e.:

- Electronics
- Gifts & Home
- Fashion

global sources  
**Exhibitions**

In fact the Electronics is further divided into two different phases, one of which coincides with the Gifts & Home show. More information on this later.

## Who Visits the Show

The show is attended by a diverse audience which includes:

- **Executives of businesses that purchase for resale:** Many of the world's leading retailers, manufacturers and brand-owners are represented by senior management, and by sourcing and product development executives. The shows are also heavily attended by a wide range of small and medium-sized importers, wholesalers and retailer businesses – including a fast growing segment of Amazon and other online sellers.
- **Executives with purchasing authority:** Since the shows are dedicated to strategic sourcing, the majority of attendees have purchasing authority -- and executive management job titles like Owner, Partner, President, Director and General Manager. Approximately 15% of buyers place orders at the show while an additional 30% place orders within a month of attending.
- **Importers seeking private-label and suppliers' brands:** With the phenomenal growth of e-commerce & advances in technology that has made it a lot easier to create “brands” in no time, an increasingly large share of the business conducted is “private label” where the brand is owned by the overseas buyer but produced by the contract manufacturer in Asia. There is also a growing amount of sourcing where the buyer is purchasing the Asian suppliers design and/or brand.

## Key Info

To find the latest dates for the different phases of the Global Sources show, you can head over to the exhibitions page [here](#).

At the time of writing this (Jan 2016), there are 3 shows in all with a total of 8,000 booths covering electronics, gifts and home products, and fashion

- Most exhibitors are manufacturers
- 90% of exhibitors are exclusive to Global Sourcing shows. This means you will not find these exhibitors at other fairs. This is an interesting stat as there is a general perception that there could be an overlap in manufacturers between the Global Sources show and Canton Fair.
- Held in AsiaWorld-Expo right beside the Hong Kong airport



## 5 Reasons why I love the Global Sources Shows

I have always enjoyed visiting all kinds of exhibitions and each one has its own charms but Global Sources is definitely right up there for me for several reasons. Here are the top 5 reasons why I absolutely love the Global Sources Exhibition:

1. **Innovative Products:** I have found, especially in the last few years more innovative/cutting edge products at Global Sources shows compared to say Canton Fair, where you find a lot of repetition. i.e. you may end up finding 500 suppliers for the same LED Torch at Canton whereas at Global Sources you are more likely to end up finding an LED Torch that can only be used as a hammer (I made that up but you get the flow). During my numerous conversations with the team at Global Sources I have learnt that they put great emphasis on finding suppliers with emerging and next-gen products and try their best to give them exposure at the fair.
2. **Start-Up Launchpad:** Starting Oct 2015, Global Sources Direct introduced the Startup Launchpad, a section dedicated to new emerging suppliers showcasing innovative products. I absolutely loved this section because there was so much innovation there and you could see a lot of young talented people behind these products most of whom were available at the fair for a chat. It was great to see Global Sources backing young inventors & start-ups. Startup Launchpad was a great success and will be continued in future versions of the fair as well. You'll find Startup Launchpad pavilions at the Mobile Electronics, Gifts & Home and Fashion shows!
3. **Experience Zones:** Another exciting feature of the Global Sources shows are the "Experience Zones". For e.g. the Electronics shows will have Experience Zones where buyers can see and try cutting edge tech products such as smart home, drones, personal transporters, etc.
4. **Catering to E-Commerce Sellers:** Out of the current major players in the exhibition/B2B portal space Global Sources is perhaps the first one that is taking an active interest in catering to e-commerce/private label sellers.
  - a. For e.g., the team at Global Source told me they are actively developing tools that will be integrated into their B2B platform to help Private Label sellers calculate [landed cost of a product](#).

- b. At the April 2016 show, Global Sources is also running the **Smart China Sourcing Summit** to help educate sellers doing Private Label business on Amazon or other online channels. I am super excited about being one of the speakers at the summit. More details here: [www.globalsources.com/summit](http://www.globalsources.com/summit)

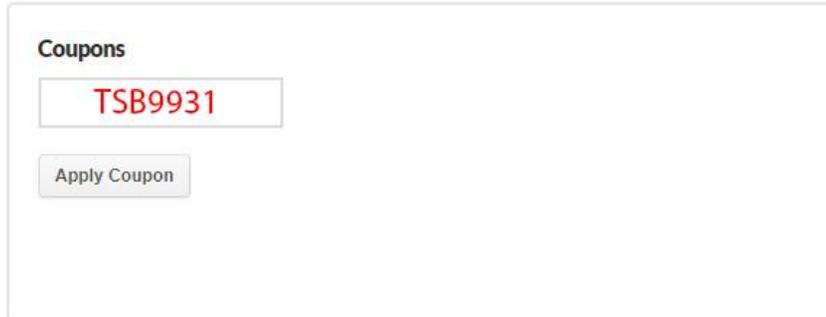
If you are an Amazon or E-Commerce seller in general, you will get great value out of the Global Sources Summit.

If you are looking to attend the summit, you can use the **Discount Code "A2M100"** at the checkout to get a discount of \$100 off the listed price.



- c. The [Cross Border Summit](#), hosted by Global From Asia, is an international business retreat with the purpose of updating its attendees (mostly Amazon Sellers) on the latest international business trends, particularly focusing on China-specific developments. Additionally, it provides ample time to network and create opportunities with other attendees and top industry executives.

If you are looking to attend the summit, you can use the **Discount Code "TSB9931"** at the checkout for a 20% discount on the ticket price.



5. **Conferences:** I absolutely love “conferences” of any kind and especially those that provide me knowledge/skills that I can apply to my work the moment I get out of the conference room, i.e. Just in Time (JIT) knowledge. Global Sources organizes some great conferences at their shows to educate buyers on sourcing best practices and industry trends. A lot of visitors miss out on these, either because they don’t have enough time or the right info. I find these offer great value and I will highly recommend you make an effort to attend these.

## 5 Tips about Global Sources Shows that will make you a Smart Cookie

1. **Analyst’s Choice Products:** Before the show, Global Sources analysts select innovative / new products to be exhibited at the show. Look out for the “Analyst’s Choice” symbol shown below on exhibitor booths to see these products.



2. **Online Appointments with Suppliers:** Most of the exhibitors at the Global Sources shows are also on their B2B portal which means you can review/research exhibitors pre-show on the website or the Global Sources app, and schedule appointments with them online before coming to the show.
3. **Show Dailies:** Back in the day when Global Sources first started out they were primarily a publication company and they still publish several magazines so this is an area they excel at. Watch out for their email “show dailies” featuring new product launches at the shows if you want to make sure you get your hands on innovative products before anyone else does.

4. **Jumping in on New Trends:** As with the “show dailies” and “Analyst’s Choice” products, Global Sources is really trying hard to make sure visitors to their fair or their site don’t miss out on new products and developing trends. They extend this initiative by having 12 industry-specific sites with the following content sections on each:
  - a. **New from Exhibitors:** New products from exhibitors at Global Sources shows selected by their Analysts
  - b. **Top 20 Most Popular products:** Exhibitor and advertiser products with the highest buyer interest
  - c. **Top 20 Trending products:** Exhibitor and advertiser products with the highest growth in buyer interest
  - d. **Personalized Product Gallery:** The most recent products from advertisers and exhibitors in buyers’ preferred categories
  - e. **Next-Gen Insider:** Insight into emerging product and demand trends
  - f. **Smart Sourcing:** Sourcing best practices
  
5. **Product Alerts:** Another advantage Global Sources has over competitors is how their trade show and B2B portal tie in beautifully so pre-show research and post-show follow-up is a breeze. Another example of this seamless integration are “Supplier Alerts”. If you are particularly impressed by a supplier at the fair, you can subscribe to supplier alerts and stay up to date with the supplier’s latest products.

### How Reliable are Global Sources Suppliers?

While every fair organizer would carry out some degree of due-diligence on the suppliers exhibiting at the fair, it is imperative that you carry out your own due-diligence before entering into a purchase agreement with a supplier.

Having said that, I put this question to the Global Sources staff and was quite impressed with the work they do to background check their suppliers, validate their key credentials and provide that information to the buyers.

- They ensure each supplier is an authentic company with a valid business registration. The registration number and other details, with a link to the certificate on the issuing authority’s website are posted on the supplier’s homepage on the Global Sources site as shown in the image below

#### Verified Business Registration Details

Registered Company: 深圳市新角度科技发展有限公司

Business Registration Number: 440301106551608

Company Registration Address: 深圳市龙岗区横岗街道安良六村锦舜工业园A栋2楼201

\* In some jurisdictions, company names and addresses are registered in Chinese only.

#### *Verified business registration on a supplier's GS website*

- A service for suppliers is “Credit Check”, which means the supplier’s business registration profile is confirmed by Experian or D&B (Dun & Bradstreet).

See an example of a credit check report here:

<http://ceaudio.manufacturer.globalsources.com/si/6008800808159/CreditProfile.htm>

The Credit Check is in fact mandatory for suppliers with a 3, 4, 5 or 6 star rating. Credit Check provides impartial credit and vital business metrics for select suppliers on Global Sources.

Using the Credit Check reports, buyers can easily compare key indicators and more efficiently manage risk. Suppliers with a Credit Check logo have agreed to allow this information to be reported to help buyers streamline the selection and due-diligence processes.

- **Product Certifications:** Global Sources will look-up certifications and provide links to the certifying authority, where available, validating certifications.

**Product Certifications**

Certificate Standard: **ASTM**  
[View scanned certification\(s\)](#)

Certificate Number: AZ 16369

Issue Date: 02-Mar-2015

Issued By: **BV**

Expiry Date: 01-Mar-2016

Scope/Range: Environmental Protection

Note: Not all certifying agents offer online lookup, and some have a lag time for posting new certificates. If you are unable to find a certificate online, contact the certification agency or supplier for further verification.

- **Supplier’s Activity & History:** Apart from the above, you can also see supplier’s actual business activities on their platforms, e.g.: Years with Global sources, trade show participation, magazine ads, major customers. This provides you with solid information about how the supplier is performing in the B2B sector.

 <p><b>Trade Show</b> Supplier will attend or has ever attended a GS trade show</p>	 <p><b>Major Customer</b> This supplier has worked with the following Major Customers: <u>Cnlight</u>, <u>Leedarson</u>.....</p>
 <p><b>Private Sourcing Event</b> This supplier was selected by a volume buyer to attend a Private Sourcing Event.</p>	 <p><b>Magazine</b> Learn more by viewing suppliers’ magazine ads</p>
 <p><b>On GS history</b></p>	 <p><b>Credit check</b> Supplier has a business registration profile independently verified with relevant government agencies</p>

- Global Sources will call or visit each company 3 or more times to collect company and product information.

## Global Sources Exhibition Sessions and Industries covered

The Global Sources shows are held twice a year in April and October in the following order. For exact dates please check out [this link](#).

### Electronics Show

Global Sources Electronics is the world's largest electronics sourcing show. Due to the immense popularity of the electronics show and demand for booth space, starting Oct 2014 electronics was broken down into 2 phases, separating Home, office & auto electronics from Mobile electronics, wearables, etc.

#### Electronics - Phase 1 – Home, Office & Auto Electronics

The first phase includes 3,500 booths and runs in April and October with the focus on home, office, and auto electronics -- plus security products and electronic components.

It attracts volume buyers from more than 100 countries who see manufacturers and suppliers from China, Korea and across Asia. This is one of the main reasons why I love to visit the Global Sources shows, as I find a lot more Korean suppliers there than I would at the fairs in China and it gives me a chance to compare Chinese suppliers against Korean suppliers & see what's coming out from other Asian markets.

- Great product selection in emerging, high-growth categories including Smart Home products, 4K TV & display, Virtual Reality, Gaming Products, outdoor imaging, photography drones, and personal electric transporters.
- Hong Kong's biggest selections:
  - Office electronics -- 1,200 booths of computer and networking products
  - Automotive electronics – 500 booths
  - Electronic components, interconnects and power supplies – 500 booths, including the **Next-Gen Components Zone** where you can see what's inside automotive, smart home securities, wearables, drones, and robotics. The Components Zone was a new introduction at the Oct 2015 show & I am confident it will be around for some time.

“

*If you are the geeky type who likes to get “inside” the technology you are using you will absolutely love the “Next-Gen Components Zone. If you are an inventor looking to source the latest components for your new electrical inventions you should not miss out on this section.*

### Electronics - Phase 2: Mobile Electronics

The second phase of the Electronics show is “Mobile Electronics” and consists of 2,500 booths. The core focus for this show is on smartphones, tablets, wearable devices and mobile accessories.

- More product selection in emerging, high-growth categories including sports & health electronics, wearables & smart watches, Bluetooth and NFC, wireless charging, MFI products
- 400 booths of suppliers manufacturing their own designs & brands
- 50 booths of robotics and recreational drones
- The Gifts & Home show takes place at the same time as the Mobile Electronics show and features over 1,000 booths of gifts, premiums and home products



### Gifts & Home

Global Sources Gifts & Home show showcases smart and creative products from China and across Asia. The show will help buyers source from innovative suppliers of gifts, premiums and home products.

- More product selection in emerging, high-growth categories including home improvement, health & personal care
- Experience Zones:
  - Smart Living – new products that are changing everyday life
  - Creative Design Product Gallery – the latest products from innovative designers and manufacturers



- Co-located with Mobile Electronics show so you can get more bang for your buck.

## Fashion

The Global Sources Fashion show showcases a wide selection of fashion items, including apparel, fashion jewelry, bags, scarves, footwear and fabrics. With 1,600 booths, the show brings together top suppliers from mainland China, India, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam and elsewhere in Asia.

- 800 booths from new exhibitors
- 230 booths of suppliers manufacturing their own designs & brands
- More product selection in high-growth categories including footwear and functional fabrics

## Do you Really Need to visit the Global Sources Exhibition?

I believe a visit to the Global Sources Exhibition is a great experience for any importer, whether new or experienced. You will get an understanding of how the industry in China (and to some extent the rest of Asia) works and realize the enormity of the scale and diversity of manufacturing in China.

However, for a highly practical importer, with limited time or financial resources, or someone who wants a direct ROI on the trip to the fair, the decision may require a bit more thinking.

Ask yourself these four key questions to see if the visiting the Global Sources show would be the beneficial for you (this could apply to most trade fairs). These questions will help you clarify expectations and allow you to assess if a visit is worth the investment.



### Q1. Are you Looking to Cut Costs or Looking for Ideas?

The Global Sources Exhibition is an absolute goldmine for importers looking for new product ideas.

Many suppliers use it as a Launchpad for bringing new products to market and create a buzz around their booth. If you are on the lookout for new, exciting products in your niche or across industries, the Global Sources show is a great place to gain early-mover advantage.

If you are already importing a specific product from China and your purpose is to meet new suppliers in order to cut costs, then the Global Sources show may not be the best avenue to reach this goal, however you could still find other suppliers.

Why? Because a large percentage of booths at the Trade Fairs in general are manned by trading companies or large manufacturers, with good marketing budgets. Therefore trade fairs might not always be the best place to get the lowest prices. There are other great ways to look for alternative suppliers for your existing products in order to manage costs.

Q2. Are you Sourcing Consumer Goods or Industrial Goods?

While the Global Sources Exhibition normally has both consumer and industrial products on display, I have personally found that it is not always the best place for sourcing industrial goods & definitely not the place for heavy goods like machinery. For consumer products, however, there are very few places that have so much choice.



China has many industry-specific fairs for both consumer and industrial goods. For industrial goods, I find these fairs offer greater access to a wider range of products and suppliers.

Q3. What is your Business Model?

Many importers have business models which might not directly profit from a visit to the Global Sources show, aside from the experience itself and insights gained from seeing the products and exhibitors themselves.

At [IMEX Sourcing Services](#), I work with a lot of Amazon & other ecommerce sellers who sell significant volumes of merchandise each year. Their business models revolve around looking

at new product opportunities with high margins, rising demand trends and low competition (an online seller's dream).

Many of these importers do not have or care about product or industry specialization. They maximize product earnings in a 6-18 month time-frame. By the time the competition starts to come in, they move on to a new product.

While they could benefit from visiting the Global Sources Exhibition, or China in general to find new products, a visit is not an imperative because their focus is not on developing a supplier base within an industry or improving relationships with the supplier. Instead, they're looking for products backed by sales research and data. They move on to the next big thing every time the market starts to get saturated.

There are also online sellers who mix and match many products and import these in consolidated shipments. The Global Sources show may be of little value to them since suppliers' minimum order quantities (MOQ) would be too high for them.

These importers are better off buying through wholesale markets in China, through B2B wholesale sites or through a [sourcing company](#) in China.

#### Q4. What is the Scale of your Business?

While I believe anyone looking to do serious business with China would consider a visit to the Global Sources show as a small investment, I also believe a visit to the Global Sources show, or China in general, is not necessarily the best investment for new ecommerce-based importers on a tight budget.

I believe their money is better spent on a lot of other areas like educating themselves about the nuances of international trade through web-based courses and training programs, using those funds for increasing purchase quantities and being able to meet supplier MOQs in order to get better pricing and control over quality, investing in quality control for example through pre-shipment inspections of goods, or in improving sales and marketing systems.

#### Final Thoughts

In summary, a visit to the Global Sources Exhibition in Hong Kong can be a great way to find new products, to find new suppliers for your existing products, and to build relationships with existing suppliers. For relative newcomers, it's a great way to assess the opportunities that exist in importing from China. It can also be a great cultural experience. If you do visit, I would also strongly recommend checking out some of their conferences as they offer great value.

But if you are on a tight budget or switch products regularly, you can find better ways to invest your money. The Global Sources show is definitely not the place for buying goods in smaller quantities (i.e. wholesale lots) and not the best place for finding low-cost suppliers for your products.

## Chapter 2 – Preparing for the Global Sources Exhibition

Before you pack your bags for Hong Kong, you can greatly benefit from doing some research so you can get the most out of your visit. Many first time visitors underestimate the scale of the fair and often run out of time to cover the sections that were most important to them or like my friend from Turkey, end up booking the plane ticket for the wrong phase.

Therefore, some preparation goes a long way in ensuring you cover your key products/suppliers first before getting distracted by the myriad of products on show.

### Determine your Goals for the Visit:

Determine your objectives for visiting the fair. They might include:

- a. Identifying and meeting new suppliers of your product
- b. Building a relationship with your existing suppliers.
- c. Discovering new opportunities, such as new products to market.
- d. Attending a conference on a subject matter that be of interest to you. For e.g. this year (2016) Global sources is running a conference for “[Manufacturing & hardware startups](#)” and for “[ecommerce/Amazon based businesses](#)”.



## Pre-Visit Research

As part of your preparation, organized research is very useful. This will serve as your guide when it comes to product details, pricing, supplier standards, compliance, and much more. Once you are clear on your goals, you can start your pre-visit research.

### [Get Quotes from the Global Sources B2B Portal for Reference Pricing.](#)

This is the first part of your pre-visit research. Once you know the products you need to source, it is good idea to send out RFQ emails to some potential suppliers before you come, irrespective of whether or not they are exhibiting at the fair. A request for quotation (RFQ) is a standard business process which invites suppliers to quote on your product.

This is one of the advantages “Global Sources” has over a lot of other trade fairs, i.e. they have a very well established B2B portal which makes this process simpler. By connecting with the supplier through the portal and getting some quotes before your visit, you would be well prepared with your “follow-up” questions and be in a better position to negotiate at the fair.

You do not however have to limit yourself to Global Sources portal and can also get quotes from other websites too and by proactively reaching out to suppliers for quotes.

This is also a good time to review those “Credit Check” reports of suppliers, I talked about above so you can get an idea of the business scope as well as scale of the supplier before shaking hands with them at the fair.

## How to get Suppliers in China to Respond to your E-mails?

Reproduced from the [Original Blog Post here](#)

Many importers complain that Chinese suppliers don't reply to email requests for quotations or are generally slow at responding to emails. This issue has come up in so many discussions, let me deal with it in some detail.

Chinese suppliers are slow at responding to emails, or do not bother to reply at all, for cultural and practical reasons.



- They receive a large number of enquiries, very few are serious. Many simply for benchmarking
- Time zone differences
- Lack of organization skill, emails often get lost
- Preference for face to face talk

Some other reasons I have noticed:

- **Lack of perceived investment:** Many suppliers still do not take online enquiries seriously. Coming to China signifies the importer is “invested” in the process. In my



opinion, even a phone call signals a higher degree of investment than an email and is a useful filtering criteria for suppliers.

- **Enquiry is not Specific Enough:** This is a major issue with new importers. Enquiries like “I am looking to import keyboards from China” are not likely to get too many responses.
- **Company No Longer Exists:** A lot of the supplier entries on B2B portals tend to be outdated, especially the free ones.
- **Company No Longer makes that Product:** It is not uncommon for small and medium sized factories to change production lines every few years, i.e. manufacture a completely different product and even switch industries based on what is “Hot” at the time. This is especially applicable to “assembly plants” that add little value to the manufacturing process.
- **Quantity is Simply too Small for the Supplier to be Interested:** This is probably the most common reason suppliers don’t respond to enquiries. Quantity is the single most important factor affecting feasibility of manufacturing operations and pricing from a factory’s point of view.

MOQ’s are in place to ensure that manufacturing a product is feasible for a factory. So when factories see orders for small quantities, they often do not even bother to



respond. In my experience, “The first order will be a small trial order, followed by large orders if the product becomes successful” doesn’t work anymore either, unless it is disguised more creatively.

- **Language and Mind-set Barrier:** The boss’s friend who knows some English helped him set up an English website, however, the boss doesn’t speak any English. His friend helps him check his English emails every now and then when she comes over. The boss recently hired a young graduate who understands some English but he is worried that the newcomer would “steal the leads” and hence would rather wait for the friend to come over.

### Getting Factories to Respond to your E-Mails

Now that we know why factories don’t respond to client emails, let’s look at some tactics you can employ to improve your response rate.

#### Drafting Detailed Product Requirements

As I pointed out, an email with limited information about what a buyer wants is not taken too seriously. It shows the client is not invested in the process, i.e. hasn’t done his own background research and hence there is a small chance that the enquiry will result in business for the factory.



From my own experience, when we receive enquiries with limited information, we are 95% certain those enquiries won't result in business. The lead is simply not ready to import, or is at a very early stage in the process.

As a [Sourcing Company](#), an importer in an early stage is not always a problem for us, since we specialize in assisting such buyers. However, for factories, this is a poor lead since the factory has neither the time nor resources to train the buyer and get them to a stage where they are ready to import. They have tons of other inquiries to deal with, and there is no guaranteed ROI in going through this "training" process.

Creating detailed product requirements can make a big difference to your response rate and will help you stand out in the supplier's inbox. This tells the supplier you understand the product and the market for the product well and hence are likely to be a serious importer.

Creating such a document will also help reduce the back and forth communication with suppliers who do respond to your initial email. It shortens their list of follow-up questions.

### Mastering the Product

There will be cases when you genuinely don't know much about the product. For example, if it's a new product you are looking to source. In such cases, try to get at least one or two price quotes before sending messages in bulk to suppliers. The first couple of suppliers will give you a lot of product info if you ask the right questions. This makes you look more prepared when you contact other suppliers.

Another benefit of this preparation is that suppliers feel you know the product and the industry, and they tend to quote you lower prices. If you act like a complete newbie, they are more likely to give you higher quotes. Suppliers have a knack for identifying inexperienced importers from a distance.

Finally, this exercise will also help you understand the minor differences in suppliers' products so that you can ensure you are [comparing like for like](#) and have a more realistic understanding of the reasons for price variances among suppliers.

### Providing Order Details

Aside from providing product details, you should also provide details about the "size" of the order. Every time you ask a supplier in China, for a quote, their first question will be, "what is your quantity"? If you do not provide this, they will quote based on MOQ. Providing these details early helps ensure that there can be a match between your size and the supplier because not every supplier would be right for your order quantity.

This is especially important if your quantities are large or at least meet the MOQ, as that becomes part of your selling proposition. If your quantities are very small but you are still looking to work with manufacturers, you may want to try the “under the radar” methods, but it does make the process a lot more tedious.

Other than the quantity, it also helps if you are upfront about your country of import, certification requirements and other important details like which incoterms do you want to be quoted for, i.e. FOB, CIF, etc.

### Standing out as a “Hot Prospect”

Just as you are shortlisting suppliers, suppliers are shortlisting and qualifying leads too, so they can invest their limited human resources in chasing the best leads, i.e. “Hot Prospects”. So it is important you come off as a hot prospect.

How do suppliers define a “Hot Prospect”? A hot prospect for a supplier would be someone:

- Who is ready to buy from China “RIGHT NOW”
- Has the capital to invest to at least meet their MOQ’s
- Has great “repeat potential”



There are other factors but the above three are the most critical qualifying criteria. Because suppliers in most industries in China work with wafer-thin margins, repeat potential is very important. This is why the points mentioned in the previous heading are critical. Show you have product and market knowledge, and you signal higher repeat-potential.

Aside from approaching the supplier armed with product knowledge, you can appear as a “Hot Prospect” by:

- Approaching as a business as opposed to an individual
- Having a professional company website
- Provide a company intro. A couple of lines about your business and your previous China imports make a big difference, because new importer = low repeat potential

### Follow up Phone Call

This is where “culture difference” really comes to the fore. Just because you sent an email to someone in China does not mean they are obligated to reply. A phone call to let them know that you have sent an email is often needed for them to take your email seriously.



This one simple change in your approach to suppliers in China can make a big difference in your response rate. Many westerners would argue that this is a sign the supplier may be less than professional and while that may be true, this is a cultural difference and the faster you accept it, the easier it will be to navigate the China landscape. If you hate making those calls or are tired of the language barrier, then you should get the bilingual Chinese team at a [sourcing company](#) like ours to do it for you ;).

## Visit China

Finally, if you are not having luck getting responses from suppliers, or your product is truly unique and your supplier is a monopoly or worse, if it's a state owned enterprise, visiting China and meeting the supplier personally might be the best solution. Of course, if your budget doesn't justify the visit then it probably won't satisfy these suppliers' MOQs and in that case, looking at alternate products may be a better solution.



If you look at approaching suppliers like a sales process, you will find that a few tweaks in your approach can make massive differences to your response rate.

Ok I went really off track there, back to the next step in the pre-visit research process:

## Make a List of Questions to ask Suppliers

Ask a lot of “good” questions, and you will learn a lot about the product. Especially when it comes to MOQs, FOB, shipping, certifications and supplier policies. This is one of the reasons why I love to visit trade fairs.

You can use the checklist below as a guide when you do your planning -- edit if necessary based on your specific product and industry.



### Supplier Checklist: Questions to ask Suppliers

- ✓ Factory Address and Website
- ✓ Manufacturer or Trader
- ✓ Number of Years in the Business
- ✓ Main Product Lines
- ✓ Production Processes
- ✓ Production Capacity
- ✓ Do they Outsource (some of) of Their Production
- ✓ Do they make any of the components or do they just assemble the different components?
- ✓ Order MOQ and Production Lead Times
- ✓ Main Markets for Export
- ✓ Number of Workers
- ✓ Product Certifications
- ✓ Product Standards
- ✓ Factory Audit and Inspection Experience
- ✓ Product Safety Testing Experience

When you starting asking “technical questions” about the product, components and manufacturing processes, that is where you can differentiate the good factories from the average ones and also stand out as a buyer who understand the product, which means you are less likely to get “newbie pricing”.

**Pro Tip:** The best resource to learn quickly about a new product and its manufacturing process I find is YouTube, there are lots of excellent videos on various products are manufactured.

## Visiting the Global Sources Exhibition

### Step 1 – Pre-Register Online

There is an admission fee of HKD50 if you register at the fair, so make sure you [Pre-Register](#) to get free admission. It will also save you some time as the check-in process is quicker when you are pre-registered.

You can pre-register for the various shows at the links below:

[Electronics](#)

[Gifts & Home](#)

[Fashion](#)

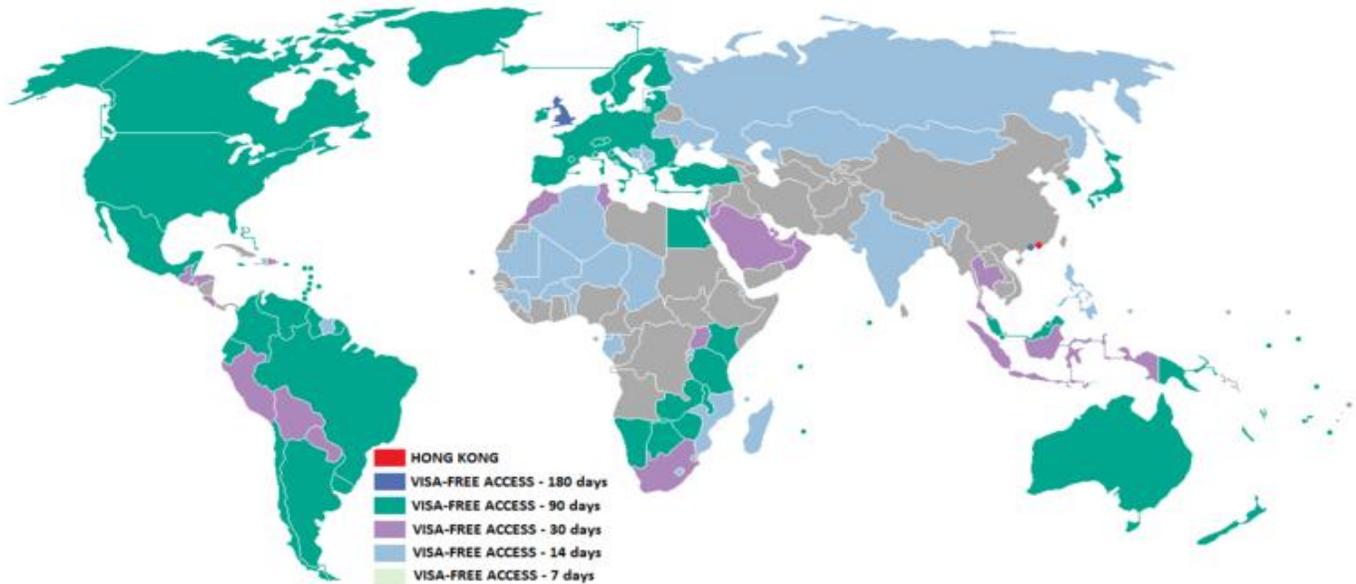
### Step 2: Apply for a Visa (If Required)

One of the main reasons why the Global Sources show is so much more convenient to attend that the other fairs in Mainland China is the Visa. Visitors from 152 countries can enter Hong Kong visa-free for a period varying from seven days to six months.

To add to this there are more connecting flights to Hong Kong than to any mainland China visit, so travelling to Hong Kong is never too difficult. Finally the fair venue is right next to the airport so if you don't want to waste time getting into the city, you could book a hotel at the airport and get right to the business.

Check this webpage to learn whether you need a visa to enter Hong Kong: [Hong Kong Visa Guide](#)

The following map is a nice representation of Hong Kong's Visa policy towards different countries.



If you do require a visa for Hong Kong, please visit your local Hong Kong embassy/consulate website for the visa procedure.

*Documents needed for application for a Hong Kong Visa*

1. One duly completed visa application form. (Visit the link to download the [Hong Kong Visa Application Form](#))
2. One recently taken 2X2 inch photo showing entire face and without a hat on. Please affix the photo to the application form.
3. Original passport with at least 2 blank visa pages and valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of application.
4. Original and copy of the residence permit (e.g. PR and RE-ENTRY PERMIT, EP) that will be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of application.
5. Original invitation letter, proof of employment and company leave letter.
6. Current bank statements for the past 3 consecutive months that can show the applicant has adequate funds to cover the duration of his/her stay in HK.
7. Round trip airline ticket and hotel reservation.

For Online application, visit <http://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/forms/forms/id1003a.html>

### Visa for Mainland China

Please note if you are looking to enter Mainland China during your visit, you would need a “Chinese Visa”. Most countries require a visa to enter China and it is recommended you apply for a visa before you leave for Hong Kong.

### China Visa from Hong Kong

If you are looking to apply for a China Visa while you are in Hong Kong, you can approach the counter of the China Travel Service (HK) Limited located at the Main Information Counter in East Lobby at the Global Sources show. China Travel Service also offers local sightseeing tours and cross-border bus, train and ferry tickets to/from China cities.

### Should I get a Single entry or Multiple entry Chinese Visa?

If you are looking to attend both the Global Sources Exhibition & [Canton Fair](#) and plan to leave Mainland China more than once, you would require a Multiple Entry Visa. Please note that even though Hong Kong & Macau are politically part of China, once you leave Mainland China for either of these places, you are deemed to have left China and your passport is stamped. Therefore, without a double or multiple entry visa, you cannot re-enter China.

### Can I use a Tourist Visa?

As you are only visiting the fair, a tourist visa will be sufficient, and to get a tourist visa for most countries all you need is your air ticket reservation and hotel bookings.

## Do you need an Interpreter at the Global Sources Show?

This is one of the questions I get asked a lot. Do you really need an Interpreter for the Global Sources Show?



Compared to the [Canton Fair](#), I have found at Global Sources shows it is much easier to find sales reps at the booths who speak pretty good English.

If you are looking to ask technical questions about a product or production processes then it might not be a bad idea to hire an interpreter. However for most business related discussion on issues like pricing, MOQ's, manufacturing capacity etc. an interpreter is not really needed.

## Checklist of Things to Bring with you

Based on my experience, here are some useful things that you should bring with you before you get on the flight to Hong Kong.

### *A Trolley or Wheeled-Suitcase.*

This is where you will put all your brochures and samples. Trust me those laptop bags or shoulder carry bags will not work. The fair venue is massive and most people run out of energy by the end of the day.



### *Lots of business cards. Including some dummy ones.*

Bring a lot of business cards. I like to keep my “Genuine Cards” in my right pocket and some “Dummy Ones”, i.e. with the wrong email address, in my left pocket. I will give my genuine cards to the suppliers I am really interested to do business with. I give the dummy ones to suppliers who I am considering but I am not sure of. Giving them a business card gets you their catalogue. The reason why should consider giving your email twice is because, being too liberal with your email will result in getting bombarded with emails after the fair.

It gets worse 3 months later, because most of the data is sold-on through marketing companies and you start getting lots of emails until you reach a point where you have to shut down your email address.



### *Camera*

For taking sample picture (suppliers will rarely hand you the samples at the fair), booths, and other stuff you find interesting and even worth sharing. Always ask for permission before taking pictures of samples as some suppliers, especially those with unique products, will not allow this. Your phone or tablet camera will do just as well.



### *Notepad, notebook or anything that you can write notes on*

Notepad – for jotting down important notes. If you are the techy type, your iPad will come in handy. You will meet so many suppliers at the fair that it is easy to forget information and specific points you will discuss with the various suppliers.



## Internet Censorship

Unlike China, there is no “Internet Censorship” in Hong Kong. However, if you are planning to cross over the border into Mainland China and love “Unrestricted” access to your favorite websites, then make sure you download a VPN software before you enter the mainland.

1. [Astrill](#) –

Speed: 121 mbps

Fastest Servers: US

Best Protocol: OpenWeb, OpenVPN



2. [Strong VPN](#) –

Speed: 20 mbps

Fastest Servers: US

Best Protocol: PPTN VPN



3. [Express VPN](#) –

Speed: 19 mbps

Fastest Servers: US

Best Protocol: OpenVPN, SSTP, PPTP



## Finding Suitable Accommodation in Hong Kong

Global Sources has deals with a number of hotels, restaurants and other service providers so registered buyers can get discounts at these hotels. Please contact Global Sources for more information on the latest discounts and deals.

### Advise on Choosing the Right Hotel Location

The best place to stay is close to the Airport unless you have a good reason to go to the city. Here are some hotel recommendations for different budgets close to the airport.

#### *Regal Airport Hotel – 4 Star*

Next to the passenger terminal at Hong Kong International Airport, this upscale hotel is 18 km from Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, and 27 km from the Ngong Ping 360 cable car.

Address: 9 Cheong Tat Rd, Hong Kong

Phone: +852 2286 8888

Visit their [website](#).



#### *Hong Kong SkyCity Marriott Hotel – 5 Star*

Set opposite a bus stop and 1.6 km from Hong Kong international airport, this upscale, airport hotel is also 18 km from Hong Kong Disneyland.

Address: 1 Sky City Rd E, Lantau Island, Hong Kong

Phone: +852 3969 1888

Visit their [website](#).



*Hotel Novotel Citygate Hong Kong*

This upmarket hotel in a contemporary tower overlooking Tung Chung Bay is 6 km from Hong Kong International Airport.

Located in: Citygate Outlets

Address: 51 Man Tung Rd, Hong Kong

Phone: +852 3602 8888

Visit their [website](#).



*Hotel Ibis Hong Kong North Point – 3 Star*

A 3-minute walk from both the North Point MTR station and North Point Ferry Pier, this functional, chain hotel in a high-rise building is also 4 km from Happy Valley Racecourse.

Address: 138 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong

Phone: +852 2588 1111

For more information regarding this hotel, visit this [webpage](#).



*Lee Garden Guest House*

A 7-minute walk from a metro station, this unfussy guesthouse on a bustling city street is 2 km from Victoria Harbour, and 4 km from the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Address: 34 Cameron Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong

Phone: +852 2367 2284



*Hong Kong Budget Hotels*

Address: Flat D3, 10/F, Block D, Chungking Mansion, 36-44 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong

Phone: +852 3104 1651



## Chapter 3 – During the Global Sources Exhibition

### Getting to the Global Sources Show Venue

The Global Sources show is held at Asia World Expo.



Depending on where you are coming from, here are some of the ways to get to the venue.

#### *Airport Express Train*

The easiest and fastest way to get to the Global Sources show is to take the convenient Airport Express train. It's only two minutes from the airport and 28 minutes from downtown.

Pre-registered buyers can redeem FREE Airport Express tickets to AsiaWorld-Expo. Present your buyer admission badge to the Global Sources counter staff to claim your free train tickets at the redemption counter at these Airport Express stations.

#### **Three easy steps to get your FREE Airport Express tickets:**

**Step 1:**

Visit our ticket redemption counters at these Airport Express stations

**Step 2:**

Present your Buyer badge to our counter staff

**Step 3:**

Get a same day return Airport Express ticket to the fair

You can find the ticket redemption counters at these Airport Express stations:

Airport Express station	Ticket redemption hours	
	April 11-13	April 14
Hong Kong (Lower Level 2)	8:30am - 4:30pm	8:30am - 3:30pm
Kowloon (Lower Level 2)	8:30am - 4:30pm	8:30am - 3:30pm
Tsing Yi (Upper Level 4)	9:00am - 4:30pm	9:00am - 3:30pm

*Free Global Sources shuttle buses*

Global Sources provides free shuttle bus service during the show to and from AsiaWorld-Expo to several locations around Hong Kong. This service is on a first-come, first served basis. No reservations are accepted. This service is provided for passengers only and not for transportation of goods. Hand baggage which exceeds 56cm X 36cm X 23cm is not allowed to be carried onboard.

Pick-up Locations	
Causeway Bay	The Excelsior Hotel
Wan Chai	Harbour Road & Hennessy Road
Tsim Sha Tsui	Chatham Road South
Tsim Sha Tsui East	Mody Road
Tung Chung	MTR Station Exit A



*Public Bus*

You can also take a public bus to the fair venue. Travel time will vary (depending on traffic) but you should plan for about one hour. All Hong Kong buses are modern, clean and air conditioned. To pay the fare, you can use HK dollar coins (exact change) or a stored-value [Octopus Card](#). The octopus card also works on Hong Kong Subway.

There are nine public bus routes to AsiaWorld-Expo:



*Private Car*

The private car park (SkyCity Carpark) is situated south of AsiaWorld-Expo. It can accommodate about 1,000 private cars.

The road network at AsiaWorld-Expo can be seen in the map below.



### *Taxi*

You can take a taxi directly to the venue. Travel time varies (depending on traffic) between 30-50 minutes. For a taxi from Hong Kong Island, expect to pay around HK\$300 (US\$45) one way as you will have to pay an additional fee to travel through Hong Kong's cross-harbor tunnel. From Kowloon, expect to pay around HK\$250 (US\$32) one way.

You can also take a taxi to the nearest Airport Express Station and then take the Airport Express train to AsiaWorld-Expo.

### **View and print the taxi instructions for taxi driver.**

- Please take me to the AsiaWorld-Expo  
請載我到 大嶼山亞洲國際博覽館 (機場附近)
- Please take me to the Airport Express Hong Kong Station  
請載我到 機場快線香港站
- Please take me to the Airport Express Kowloon Station  
請載我到 機場快線九龍站
- Please take me to the Airport Express Tsing Yi Station  
請載我到 機場快線青衣站

## Getting to AsiaWorld-Expo from Guangzhou

Comprehensive cross border bus services provide easy land access to and from Guangzhou to Hong Kong. Regular daily bus services are available from AsiaWorld-Expo to and from Guangzhou province during the show period. Advanced booking is required for pick-up/drop-off at AsiaWorld-Expo.

If you are traveling from Guangzhou to Hong Kong, you can take the train from Guangzhou East Station to Hung Hom station and then either take a taxi to AsiaWorld Expo or take a taxi/bus to Hong Kong station and then take the Airport Express to get to the fair.

## What to wear at the Show?

You need not worry about what to wear when visiting the fair as you can dress as formally or as casually as you like. But it is advisable to wear your most comfortable pair of shoes and clothes as you don't want to end up with blisters at the end of the day. You will be doing a lot of walking. This is especially important for women who like to wear high-heels.

A note on men in suits: From my experience and numerous conversations with suppliers, suppliers often associate suits with new importers. Therefore, you may want to avoid suits if:

- a. You are looking to get the best quotes
- b. You like to be comfortable on what is normally a pretty tiring experience for most people



## Navigating the Exhibition Venue

It can be difficult to orient yourself inside the show venue, especially on a first visit. The following are a number of key landmarks that will help you get your bearings.

### East Lobby

The East Lobby is the big entrance hall – you'll see escalators and a wide flight of stairs in front of you as you enter from outside. The adjacent East Entrance is where taxis and private cars pick up and drop off passengers.

### West Lobby

The West Lobby is the smaller entrance hall, close to the parking for coaches and buses.

### Conference Rooms

Located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, next to the IKON restaurant. From the show floor, go to the East Lobby and take two sets of escalators up.

### Halls 1 & 2

You can recognize Hall 1 by the balcony that runs around two sides of its walls. Hall 2 is often used as a concert venue. It has distinctively thick carpeting compared to the other halls.

### Halls 3 to 11

These halls form the largest exhibition space at the venue. Note that during the shows, the dividing walls are removed, so you need to look at the numbers on booths, floor labels, or walls to see which hall you're in.

Several foyers run down the middle of these halls, splitting them. Halls 3, 6, 8 and 10 are on one side. Halls 5, 7, 9 and 11 are on the other. Note that there is no Hall 4.

There's a corridor above the foyers, which connects the East Lobby and West Lobby. This is a convenient way to get from one side of AsiaWorld-Expo to the other while avoiding crowds on the show floor.

For the Complete Floor Plan Guide of the Global Sources Visit the links below.

#### Floor Plans

[Follow the link](#) and click on each hall number to view the floor plan for the Electronics phase 1 show.

[Follow the link](#) and click on each hall number to view the floor plan for the Gifts and Home Products show.

[Follow the link](#) and click on each hall number to view the floor plan for the Mobile Electronics show.

[Follow the link](#) and click on each hall number to view the floor plan for the Mobile Electronics show.

#### The Mobile App

You can also download the Global Sources integrated sourcing solutions app through your mobile devices and find suppliers on the go.

[Download](#) the app.

#### Onsite Services

##### Registration Counters

##### *Counters for pre-registered buyers*

Pre-registered buyers can claim their free admission badge and official show guide directory at this counter.

##### *On-site registration counters*

On-site registration counters offer quick registration services to walk-in buyers.

##### Information Counters

Information counters are available in many locations at the fairground to help you identify booth locations, exhibitors and products. You may also enquire for Hong Kong's information, transportation, entertainment recommendation, and more.

You can also visit the Information Counter at the East lobby for more complimentary services including free mobile phone charging, travel arrangement and mobile phone rental.

### Free Buyer's Lounge

You can relax, check your e-mail and have a cup of coffee at the buyers' lounges.



### Legal Services Room

The legal services room, operated by the Official Legal Advisor of this

Fair, ATL Law Offices, will be located at the Fair Management Office to provide professional consultancy services to visitors concerning intellectual property rights.



### Restaurants & Catering Services

Various restaurants are available at the exhibition venue, offering a variety of cuisines.

#### *Arena Kitchen*

A contemporary place to enjoy a variety of international delights. On concert and large-scale event days, it can also be changed to buffet setting serving various kinds of cuisine.



*IKON Seaview Restaurant*

Located on the Level 2 offers a fine dining location. It is a great place for important meetings.



*Self-service fast food outlets*

A selection of fast food outlets inside exhibition halls serve Asian and Western specialties.



*Coffee shop*

Visitors can take a coffee break at the cafe located in Level 1.



*Spotlight Bar*

After a long day of supplier sourcing you can hang out on the Spotlight bar for an R & R!



### *International Cuisines*

There are also a wide variety of sumptuous international cuisines served on the EAT @ International Restaurant.



### *Luggage Storage*

The Expo Concierge is located at key entrances of AsiaWorld-Expo. Value-added services from Concierge counters include: Porter Assistance and Cloak Room, Travel Booking Assistance, Baggage or Parcel Storage / Forwarding, Mobile Phone Cards and Recharge Coupons.

### *On-Site Prayer Rooms*

Muslim visitors can perform their daily religious duties during the show. The on-site prayer rooms (with separated facilities for men and women) at Level 1 provide you with a quiet place to pray in privacy.



### Floral Services

A flower shop, run by [Ambassador Flowers & Gifts](#), will be located at the East Concourse and offers a wide range of flower arrangements, potted plants and other floral services.

### Visitor Inquiries

For visitor inquiries, you can contact Global Sources at:

Tel: (852) 8199-7308

E-mail: [visit@globalsources.com](mailto:visit@globalsources.com)

## Differentiating between Manufacturers and Traders at the Show - How to Spot Genuine Manufacturers at the Show

*“I have heard there are lots of trading companies at the Fair, how do I ensure I am dealing with manufacturers only.”*

P.S: This section is reproduced from the original blog [post here](#).

This question stems from the belief that it is better to deal with manufacturers than traders. This is true in many cases, however under many circumstances it is better to deal with traders than manufacturers.

Let me share some pointers you can use to differentiate between manufacturers and traders at most Chinese sourcing fairs and not just the Global Sources show.

### Why do Traders Masquerade as Manufacturers

Importers who have been importing from China for a while, or people who have been on B2B websites or sourcing fairs in China will know it is common for trading companies in China to claim that they are manufacturers. Importers often look at this as an unethical practice, which it certainly is. However, traders have their own justifications for this.

Many importers, especially new ones, are under the impression that buying from a trading company will be more expensive than buying from a manufacturer. Due to this perception, they take traders off their shortlist at the very beginning of the process.

This can be quite demoralizing for the salespeople in these trading companies, since their salaries are largely commission-based. To counter this, many trading companies and/or their sales people feel they have to claim to be manufacturers.

The degree to which they take this position varies significantly, with some trading companies even putting fake pictures of factories on their catalogues. So how do we distinguish traders from manufacturers at trade fairs in China?

The five tips below should come in handy:

### *1. Just Ask Them*

As simple as this sounds, this should be the first question to ask any supplier, if you are in doubt. There are lots of ethical and honest trading companies in China, and they will simply tell you that they are a trading company. If they claim to be a factory, tell them you would like to visit their factory as you are already in China. Observe their reaction.



If they are a trading company, they may offer a vague answer. If they are truly a factory and they see you as a qualified customer, they will in most cases go out their way to encourage you to visit the factory. Having a factory is a unique selling proposition (USP) in itself in the eyes of the factory. And once you invest the time and effort to visit a factory, the chances of your placing an order with them increase significantly.

### *2. Look at their Product Range*

Most factories in China are highly specialized and focus on making a very limited range of products. Therefore, if you see a booth carrying a fairly wide range of products, even within a specific industry, that could be indicative of a trading company.



Another common scenario in China is that a factory may be manufacturing one product but trading in others. This is a difficult one to spot because the factory would pass most background checks and come out as a qualified factory. The only sure-shot way to confirm they are the manufacturer of a specific product is to check out the production line for that product or use tips four and five together.

### *3. Look at the Address*

Every time I go to a trade fair in China and receive a product catalogue at a booth, the first thing I do is look at the address. The address on a Chinese supplier's catalogue can tell you a lot about the supplier.

Factory addresses would normally be in far-off outskirts areas and you can look for keywords like "Industrial Area/Zone/Park", "XYZ Village", "economic zone", etc. Most trading company addresses in China would start with something like "Room No X", or would be property addresses in cities.

If you see the latter while the supplier claims to be a factory, you can always dig deeper and ask more questions.

#### *4. Ask lots of technical questions*

Compared to trading companies, factories are normally in a better position to answer technical questions about a product's manufacturing processes and common quality problems with the product. They typically tell you in great detail why their product doesn't have that specific quality problem while most other products in the market do :).

This works well if you yourself understand your product well and have some idea of the materials and production processes. If you are visiting the sourcing fair with a specific product in mind, then YouTube is your friend when it comes to finding useful information about manufacturing processes for your product.

#### *5. Ask if they are open to a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Factory Audit.*

You can ask suppliers if they are open to a [factory audit](#) by a third party [inspection company](#) before an order is placed. A factory audit is designed to help importers substantiate the various claims made by suppliers and analyze the production capabilities, resources, and certifications of potential suppliers.



Traders would normally not be comfortable with this as it means exposing their “source”. This tactic can also be used when finding suppliers on B2B portals or through other sources.

## Don't Eliminate Traders too Quickly

I hope these pointers are handy when you're trying to distinguish traders from manufacturers at sourcing fairs in China. However, I believe it is not always a good idea to eliminate traders simply due to negative perception bias.

Trading companies can offer value in a lot of ways that manufacturers can't. They might get you access to lower MOQs, better service quality (English speaking staff, etc.), or product accessories that a manufacturer may not carry. And they can even offer better pricing under certain circumstances.

## Eating Out & Activities in Hong Kong:

### The 10 Best Restaurants

#### 1. RyuGin, Hong Kong

The restaurant is located on the 101st floor of the landmark ICC, which is Hong Kong's tallest building, the restaurant offers a Japanese atmosphere and striking views of the West Kowloon's harbor and Hong Kong's skylines.



### 2. Caprice at Four Seasons Hotel, Hong Kong

Caprice is inside the Four Seasons Hotel which is located in the central district. The restaurant's pride is its first-class views of Victoria Harbour and a perfect blend of French and Chinese cuisines.



### 3. Liberty Private Works, Hong Kong

Liberty Private Works features an eight course French menu and offers exquisite flavors and unique dining atmosphere.



#### 4. Ming Court at Langham Place Hotel, Hong Kong

Located inside the Langham Place Hotel, Ming Court houses 430 wines and offers a unique wine pairing and dining experience with an affordable menu.



#### 5. L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon at The Landmark, Hong Kong

The restaurant serves modern French food and Japanese cuisine in small portions with vibrant atmosphere.



#### 6. Amber at The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong

The Amber is famous for its very dramatic chandelier that is made up of more than 4,000 bronze rods which creates a dramatic lighting effect. Think Parisian dining style experience but with the taste of the Orient.



#### 7. Summer Palace at Island Shangri-La, Hong Kong

Summer Palace is located inside Island Shangri-La. The restaurant's interior is decorated with sparkling chandeliers.



#### 8. Man Wah at Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong

The Man Wah restaurant is inside Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Hong Kong. The beautiful settings, original paintings, gold-plated ceiling lamps and a breath-taking view of Hong Kong's skyline are just a few of the reasons why patrons keep on coming back.



#### 9. 8½ Otto e Mezzo BOMBANA at Landmark Alexandra, Hong Kong

Can be found in the shopping center at Landmark Alexandra, the restaurant offers classic meat and fish dishes.



## 10. One Harbour Road at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong

The restaurant serves up traditional home-style Cantonese cuisine using the highest quality ingredients.



### Local Delicacies in Hong Kong

#### 1. Snake Soup

Snake soup is considered a delicacy in the city, as traditionalists believe it wards off colds and other maladies.



*2. Eel Clay Pot Rice from Choi's Kitchen*

The Eel clay pot rice is a must try from Choi's kitchen located in Tai Hang.



### *3. Hong Kong Style Milk Tea*

The innovative milk tea served by Little Lamb is famous for its home-made milk tea syrup, craft beer and chocolate bitters.



### *4. Ramen from Foxtail & Broomcorn*

The ramen from Foxtail & Broomcorn is famous for being MSG-free. It's a complete meal made of Hokkien noodles in prawn broth on top of Vietnamese noodles.



### 5. Peking Duck Pancakes

Mr. Bing is famous for their duck *jianbing* which is an affordable delicacy stuffed with duck, hoisin sauce, cucumber and other ingredients served in big portions.



### 6. Typhoon Shelter Crab

From the miniature outdoor urban farm of Sofofama, also try their seasonal tonic soups and cocktails.



### 7. Curry Fish balls

Famous giant curry fish balls on the street-side snack stalls of Cheung Chau.



### 8. Pineapple Bun

Locally known as *boh loh baau* which literally means “pineapple bun” and is the perfect complement of milk tea.



## Tourist Places and Things to do in Hong Kong

### *Top 10 Attractions*

#### 1. The Peak

Out-of-this-world view of towering Skyscrapers, lovely glittering view of the harbor and the green hills of the New Territories.



#### 2. Hong Kong Disneyland

Offers magic, fun and adventure perfect for young and young at heart as you embark on a journey where your favorite Disney characters await.



### 3. Ocean Park Hong Kong

If you are into thrilling rides, giant pandas and fish friends then the world-class aquarium of Hong Kong Ocean Park is a must to go to.



### 4. Ladies' Market

A span of about one kilometer of clothing, accessories and souvenirs filled market where you can bargain your heart out.



### 5. Temple Street Night Market

For a genuine exposure of Hong Kong's culture then a visit to the temple is a must. You can find many souvenirs, snacks opera singers and even fortune tellers



### 6. Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (and Golden Bauhinia Square)

One of Hong Kong's famous structures which held significant historical ceremonies.



### 7. Clock Tower

Hong Kong's famous landmark which serves as a reminder for the Age of Steam and the country's rich colonial heritage.



### 8. Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade

This spans along the Clock Tower and stretches towards all the way to Hung Hom. The promenade draws in many love birds, photography enthusiasts due to its dramatic and architectural spectacle.



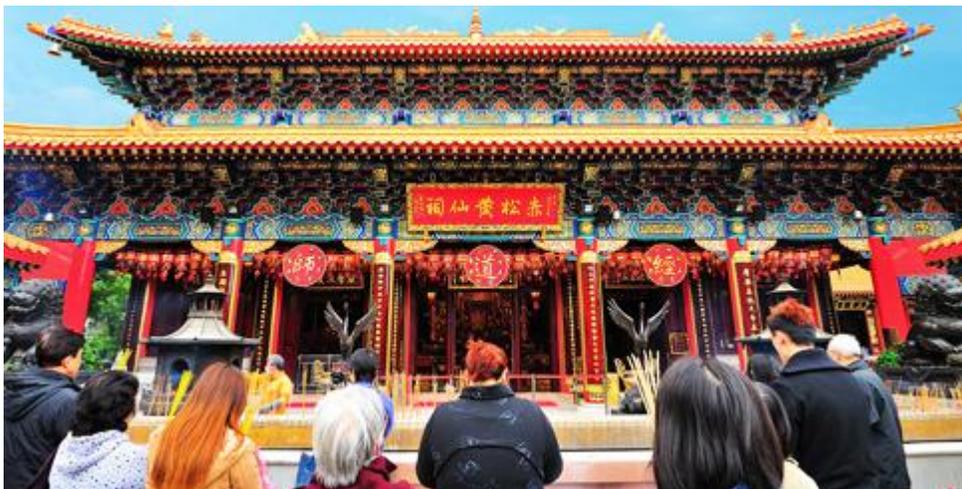
### 9. Lan Kwai Fong

Best known to be Hong Kong's party hot spot! The place comes to life at night times as it is home to over 90 restaurants and bars.



### 10. Sik Sik Yuen Wong Tai Sin Temple

The temple is a Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian temple honoring a legendary monk, Wong Tai Sin.



## Useful Numbers for Emergencies in Hong Kong:

Directory Inquiries	1081
Police Inquiries	2527 7177
Emergency Services	999

## Shopping

### Street Markets & Shopping Streets

#### Cheung Sha Wan Road

Hong Kong's glamorous fashion designers come to the wholesale markets of Cheung Sha Wan Road to sift through fabrics and other raw materials for their creations.



Address: Cheung Sha Wan Road, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

How to get there: MTR Shum Shui Po Station Exit C1

### *Apliu Street Flea Market*

When you are looking for bargain-priced new and second-hand electronic devices then this is the place to be. A wide array of audio-visual equipment & telecommunications products are on display.



Address: Apliu Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

How to get there: MTR Sham Shui Po Station, Exit C2

### *Gough Street*

One of Hong Kong's eclectic neighborhood which has a good mix of designer homewares stores.

Address: Gough Street, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong Island

How to get there: MTR Sheung Wan Station Exit A2. Walk along the Bonham Street to Wellington Street, turn to the Gough Street at Aberdeen Street.



### *Shanghai Street*

Shanghai Street is one of Hong Kong's oldest thoroughfares and a perfect go-to place if you are looking for kitchenware and accessories.



Address: Shanghai Street, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

How to get there: MTR Yau Ma Tei Station Exit C. Walk along Man Ming Lane

### *Tai Yuen Street*

From toys that brings back childhood memories to the latest toys that kids fusses about, Tai Yuen Street has lots toy collectibles, limited editions toys and many more!



Address: Tai Yuen Street, Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island

How to get there: MTR Wan Chai Station Exit A3. Walk for around two minutes.

### *Weather*

Hong Kong's extended summer spans June to September, with temperatures cooling off in October until March. The rainy typhoon season usually lasts from July to August. Lowest temperature is 20.6°C(69.1°F) and highest, 25.1°C (77.2°F).

### *Foreign Consulates in Hong Kong*

More than 100 countries and territories have representative offices in Hong Kong. Their contact details are listed [here](#).

### Interesting Facts about Hong Kong

1. Hong Kong means “Fragrant Harbor”.
2. Hong Kong has more Rolls Royce’s per person than any other city in the world.
3. Hong Kong consists of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, the New Territories, and several other smaller islands spread over 1,092 square kilometers.
4. Hong Kong has the most skyscrapers (classified as building with more than 14 floors) in the world; double that of its nearest rival: New York City.
5. Hong Kong has a Cash-Free System, the Octopus cards which are pretty handy.
6. Hong Kong police force is known as “Asia’s finest” if safety is your priority.
7. Dai Pai Dong, Fast Food Noodle Shops, are common sites in Hong Kong offering an inexpensive bowl of noodles for around HK\$20 and free tea.
8. Most of Hong Kong’s buildings and infrastructures have holes in the middle as they believe that dragons from the mountains can continue to drink water from the sea in Feng Shui practice.
9. The people in Hong Kong have the highest IQ average in the world at 107.
10. A 10% service fee is charged in most hotels and restaurants. You may give a tip if service charge is not included.

## Chapter 4 – After the Global Sources Exhibition

### Preparing for your Trip Home

- Expect heavier luggage for your return – think of all the thick brochures you have accepted from the exhibitors during the fair. **Tip:** Take pictures of the most important pages of the catalogues you are interested in so you can dispose of the rest.
- If you have collected a lot of samples at the fair, it is normally cheaper and more convenient to [courier these back home](#).
- Be aware of customs regulations in your home country, especially if you have bought tons of replica stuff from the “dark corners” of China. In most countries, carrying these is illegal and you may get into trouble with customs.

### Back to your own Country Follow Up

Do follow up with the suppliers that you are considering via e-mail or a phone call. In your follow-up email with the supplier:

- You can resend the detailed specifications of the product, clarify product standards and compliance issues.
- You should request an RFQ so you may review it. Don't be surprised if it's not the same prices as quoted at the fair.



- It is not unusual for suppliers to quote you higher prices at the fair, therefore once you are back you can re-negotiate the pricing with your suppliers.
- If you are a new importer, make sure you “[avoid these 5 common mistakes that a lot of importers make](#)”.
- Make sure you minimize your risk through [payment terms negotiations](#) with your suppliers.

## Chapter 5 – The Ultimate Global Sources Show Checklist

Here is a useful checklist that should help you with most of the important things that we have covered throughout this eBook.

Four questions to decide if you should visit the Global Sources Exhibition

- Are you looking to cut costs or looking for ideas?
- Are you sourcing for consumer goods or industrial goods?
- What is your business model?
- What is the scale of your business?

Assuming that you have decided to visit the show

- Perform Pre-visit Preparation and Research
  - Getting some quotes from Alibaba
  - Sending out RFQ emails to multiple potential suppliers
  - Finding Chinese suppliers before physical visit on the Global Sources B2B portal.

To improve the response rate from your Chinese suppliers, try the following:

- Draft a detailed product requirement
- Provide order details
- Stand out as a 'Hot Prospect'
- Follow up with a phone call
- Visit China

- Make a list of questions to ask your suppliers

After the pre-visit product research, it's time for some other preparation such as:

- Pre-Register for the fair online
- Apply for a visa (If required)
  - Know what type of visa to get and the application procedure
  - Prepare all the necessary documents

- Bring the Following:
  - Trolley or a wheeled suitcase
  - Business cards
  - Camera
  - Notepad
  - Comfortable shoes & clothing
  
- Get a reliable VPN to access all your internet essentials if planning to travel to China
- Find suitable accommodation and transport
  
- Book an Interpreter if required.
- Download the Important Apps (Play store is blocked in China)
  - Hong Kong MTR App
  - Uber
  - Global Sources App

#### Getting to AsiaWorld-Expo

- Familiarize yourself with transportation options and decide
  - Know the common scams in Guangzhou and ways to avoid them
- Be aware of how to differentiate genuine manufacturers from trading companies
- Don't accept every single product catalogue handed to you by exhibitors
- Shortlist possible suppliers you may want to visit and map out the easiest and shortest way towards their booth

#### Once you get some time from business, relax and explore Hong Kong

- Check out the best restaurants
- Check out the famous tourist attractions

## Final Words

I hope you found the information in this eBook of some value. If you do, please do share it with anyone who you feel might be able to benefit from this. You can do so by using the “sharing links” [here](#).

If you are planning to visit the Global Sources Exhibition and have questions that may not have been answered yet please feel free to post questions as comments on this post [here](#). If you have attended the Global Sources show before please do share your experiences on the blog as well as I will absolutely love to hear them.

If you have feedback on this book, please feel free to write to me using the [Contact page](#) on the site. If you found this content useful, you may also want to [sign-up for updates at The Sourcing Blog](#) for future posts where I talk about various issues related to sourcing from China, dealing with Chinese factories, managing your risk, developing new products in China and other supply chain issues.

**Ashish Monga**

[www.TheSourcingBlog.com](http://www.TheSourcingBlog.com)



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