

'Made In Mania'

"I was just in the States for a week on a business. I hadn't been there for some ten years and was **astonished** to find that almost nothing is 'Made in the USA' anymore. Everything had been produced either in India, China, Ecuador, Mexico... even the **quintessential** American **penny loafers** carried a foreign label."

Truth is it's difficult to find a product at a **reasonable** price that isn't made in China or an underdeveloped country today. If you want to buy cosmetics that are made in France or an authentic Swiss army knife, you're going to **pay through the nose**. The question is, how much do consumers really care about where the stuff they buy is made these days?

Populous countries with **disposable income** to match seek to feed their **enormous** consumer appetites with products that are available 24/7...but not at any price!

Competitiveness is off the Richter scale, **compelling** companies to set up camp in the current manufacturing hotspots abroad. And not only production is shipped off shore: more and more North Americans get their call-center service not only with a smile but with a **discreet** Indian accent. Regardless of how you feel about it outsourcing, **offshoring** and **offshore outsourcing** are the here and now of business. The **forecast**? Most claim the trend will not only continue but **escalate**.

But have the true costs been lost in the race to the **cash register**, ask concerned consumer groups? Is the price more important than the environment and the working conditions of people thousands of kilometers away?

Corporations with a **conscience** have responded with **CSR** reporting in an effort to **convince** interest groups that their decisions are based not only on financial factors, but also on the social and environmental **consequences** of their activities.

Who'd have ever thought those 'Made In' labels would **spark** such **controversy**...

Glossary

astonish	surprise
compel	force somebody to do something
controversy	a dispute where there is strong disagreement
convince	make somebody sure or certain of something
CSR (corporate social responsibility)	a concept whereby organizations consider the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on the society and the environment
discreet	tactful
escalate	become greater
forecast	prediction
offshore outsourcing	the practice of hiring an external organization to perform some business functions in another country
offshoring	the relocation of business processes from one country to another
pay through the nose	pay an excessive amount of money
penny loafer	a low, leather step-in shoe, usually with moccasin construction, with broad flat heel
populous	lots of people
quintessential	representing the perfect example of a class or quality
reasonable	not too expensive
spark	put in motion