Already, much of what America consumes, America makes, but since the recession in 2008, manufacturing on American soil and the promotion of locally sourced and locally made products has been on the rise.

The recession spurred a change in consumer culture, according to Department of Marketing Chair and Professor Chris Pullig. “You see a lot of companies branding locally sourced or regionally sourced as well as ‘Made in the USA,’” Pullig said. “People will buy and actually pay a price premium for products they think has this other benefit of supporting the local economy. When things get tough, like the recession, people tend to withdraw and focus just on their needs and surroundings.”

In a recent Gallup poll, 45 percent of Americans claimed they’d made an effort to buy products made in the U.S. More than 60 percent of those consumers attributed the strategic purchases to one of two motives: patriotism or stimulation of job growth.

“It has more to do with the values and the social undercurrent right now of taking care of our own rather than patriotism or ethnocentrism, which is contrary to what a lot of people think in business,” Pullig said.
The RESHOREING MOVEMENT, the opening of manufacturing plants in the U.S. rather than overseas, is not solely because of an increase in consumer interest, though.

“The talk of reshoring is really quite serious as oil prices went up and transportation costs started to go up,” Department of Management Chair Blaine McCormick said. “But also, the advanced manufacturing trends that we see that lower the cost of labor. Everything from robotics in manufacturing to additive manufacturing will have on this upward trend. The displacement of much less labor intensive and much more high tech robotic wonderlands.”

Despite the influx of plants and factories to the U.S., the technological improvements reduce manual labor needs, and the job openings that are available require more tech savvy skill sets. Many Americans, including politicians, are concerned with the effect increased trade liberalization will have on this upward trend. The displacement of unskilled labor and the wage stagnation of recent years is often falsely attributed to trade increases rather than technological improvements, according to Emeritus Professor of International Economics Joe McKinney.

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TPP will come into effect within two years, if all 12 countries ratify it. The agreement could go before the U.S. Congress following the 2016 elections. Meanwhile, President Obama’s administration has been pushing to conclude the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations by the end of the year.

“With the increased automation of manufacturing, other stages of the supply chain are being affected, like transportation and communication. By 2025, Daimler expects to mass produce a driverless tractor-trailer, a move that faces safety concerns and potential governmental restrictions.”

Many companies are making moves to bring manufacturing back to American soil because it makes good business sense. The business news section is full of examples. The new Tesla lithium ion battery factory in Nevada, called the Gigafactory, is scheduled to begin cell production in 2017. Boeing builds planes in Washington. Many Toyota trucks are made in Texas. Even the production of pink yard flamingos has been moved back to the U.S.

“The Made in America” segment on ABC’s World News Tonight with David Muir is a testament to Americans’ renewed interest in manufacturing at home. Recently, a May 2016 segment covered Marriott’s decision to replace towels made in the U.S. by towels produced in China. As the presidential campaign rhetoric criticizes trade liberalization efforts, two major trade agreements have reached their final stages.

In February 2016, 12 countries signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP). The 12 countries, which include two of the world’s largest economies, the U.S. and Japan, account for approximately 40 percent of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 26 percent of global trade.

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