Being a Business Major, and growing up in an entrepreneur family made me realize that in order to be successful in my career I had to know what China was all about. After finally making the decision of going to China, I started doubting myself. I wasn’t sure if the trip was a good idea after hearing many terrible comments about China. I have always believed that cultural awareness is the key to achieve success in both a personal and professional level. This way of thinking gave me the independence to not listen to those comments, so I decided to take a risk. After all, I thought to myself that the worse thing that could happen was loose a couple of pounds and get a little home sick.

On May 10th this year I arrived to Shanghai, China, with very minimum expectations about food, culture, manufacturing facilities, sightseeing, and technology. But a couple of hours after my arrival, all the “not so good” perceptions I had about China started to slowly shift to a better direction: “the good one”. China Retail Study Tour was the most amazing experience I have ever had in my entire life. For 3 weeks I experienced an exhausting but very rewarding learning experiences. We met and learned about multiple successful companies, analyzed a couple of manufacturing plants, and got to enjoy and explore multiple touristic places (cultural visits).

Walking through 1st, 2nd, and 3rd tier I got to compare how much more developed in terms building construction, retail stores, and diversity of people are these cities. 1st and 2nd tier cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Guangdong already well developed into commercial cities, all of them with more than 10 million people in population. These cities had beautiful skyscrapers, luxurious shopping malls, and a mix of multiple cultures from all over the world. The first days on these cities I thought Chinese people were very cold and unfriendly, but the more I learned about their culture the more I realized that Chinese people
are friendly—just a little shy. Once you get to know them, they can even be more friendly and helpful than anybody in the America. But not every Chinese city was as developed. Yingkou, in my perception, was way less developed. I saw a lot of poverty in the streets, not many luxury brands were present, and mom-and-pop shops were more common than big retailers, such as Wal-mart and Carrefour. Even though Yingkou wasn’t as luxurious and fancy as the other cities we visited, it has plans in the near future to be one of the top cities in China. And most importantly, in contrast to Shanghai and Shenzhen, people of Yingkou were extremely warm and welcome from the day we arrived.

Like I said before, the China Retail Study Tour, as an overall experience, was the most exciting learning opportunity I have ever had the opportunity of experiencing in my life. Everything in the country and culture was fascinating to me. The way the Chinese build and care about professional relationships—“Guanxi,” made us feel loved and welcomed to every single company we visited. I enjoyed learning about the different ways companies had to implement heavy-market researches in order not to fail in China. The fact that all companies believe that being successful and a leader in China is one of their most important goals for the upcoming years really proved to me that China is the place to be if you are a company or a professional. China is growing more and more as a powerful country every day, and being a witness of their growth and wonderful country was a privilege.

After going through this eye-opening experience, I fell in love with China and its culture. I admire its people and all of those companies that have successfully entered and remained in the Chinese markets. If I ever have the opportunity to go back for study, work or pleasure, I wouldn’t have to think about it twice. I would pack my bags and go because I strongly believe that China is the place to be, and I wouldn’t want to miss being a part of it.