**Interview 1**

Shanina Kseniia

**Guest**

* Country: China
* Age: 25
* Status: Student

Interviewer:

Hello.

Say something about yourself for the beginning, please. No name, if you don't want, just some information like where are you from and where do you work.

Guest:

Okay. It is my greatest pleasure to participate in the HSE university project. So, let me do a brief introduction about myself. My name is ---. I came from China. My Chinese name is ---. Nowadays, I'm studying my Master's Degree in High School of Economics in Russia, St. Petersburg campus.

It is my greatest pleasure to illustrate anything related to the cultural code of China, because China is the country that I had been living for my entire life. Around 20 years. So I have my own perspectives around anything related to culture in China.

So maybe it will be somehow very different with most of the people's views, but I hope you can understand me very well, okay.

Interviewer:

Okay, thank you, we'll try. So you're currently working in company in Russia, right?

Guest:

Yeah, currently. Right now I am working full-time in a restaurant. That restaurant was opened by Russian people, but it is a Chinese restaurant. The name of the restaurant is the Pisha Dynasty Ming, and that place previously was the museum of Joseph Brodsky and Alexander Brodsky, because Joseph Brodsky's favorite dish was the Chinese food.

You know, he was the greatest writer in the former Soviet Union. When he received the Nobel Prize of Literature, he was having Chinese food in a Chinese restaurant in the town street of London, something like this.

Interviewer:

Very interesting, actually haven't heard about it.

Guest:

Yes, because in HSE we have very demanding standards, you know, our professor asked all the foreign students to find interviews or a full-time job by themselves. For me, I was working as a Chinese social media marketing manager and doing all shifts in that restaurant.

Actually, it was a great experience and also a very good opportunity for me to improve myself and to get to know different people from the restaurant because while I was working, I have a lot of exposures to different people that coming to our restaurants and also it was the first job in my life. Previously I never found a job by myself so this time I do realize that it is very difficult to make money on your own.

So, I get to know that it is very important for me to save the money, because earn money isn't that easy. You know, money isn't a blood, but a vein or something like this.

Interviewer:

And do you like the company culture in your current work place?

Guest:

Yes, yes, yes, yes. I do like the company's atmosphere. You know, there's quite a different the culture code between the companies in Russia and that in China. Russian companies are very tolerant to the newcomers. Sometimes I made some very huge mistakes. I was scolded by my boss a lot and my employees a lot. Sometimes, you know, I don't know the culture's code in the Russian company.

But it is worth to try to make mistakes because after you make mistakes, you started to realize that you shouldn't do such things. For example, you shouldn't eat in an open space because it was quite impolite. And also, when the customers go inside of the restaurant, it is necessary for them to take off their coats.

But in China, the Chinese restaurants won't work in this way. Because in China, you know, we even don't have the wardrobe to put the clothes to. Because in China, we don't have these customs. And we don't have some occupations to hire someone to put the customers closest to the rightest place, we don't have these occupations.

That's the main difference between the Russian restaurant and the Chinese restaurant. And also, in the Russian restaurant, it is okay that if sometimes the customers give you some tips but in China no one is allowed to give tips to the customers. Because you know the Chinese people, in their opinion you work for this job, so you do the job that you were required to. And also, the boss sometimes forbidden their employees to get some extra money from the customers because they think the customers should give all the money to the boss rather than to the employees.

The only way for the employees to receive money is from their boss, not from the customers. But the tips, the culture from the Western countries, you know, while you were eating in some western countries, especially in France, in Germany, all the customers, they have had to leave the tips to the customers because they aren't working for free to you because they deserve some money from their services.

But in China, you know, the Chinese people they kind of working actually overtime for free and all the Chinese people they get used to it. So that's the main difference between the working environment from the western culture and the oriental culture. It was quite stressful and quite overloaded in the oriental countries, you know, it is very hard to get money.

But in the Western countries, you know, working as a waiter in restaurants was pretty fun. You can get appreciation from your customers. And also, the tips, something like this.

Interviewer:

Thank you. This is very interesting conversation. And let's talk about your experience of work a little bit. What do you think motivates you the most to work on your place?

Guest:

Yes, I think the biggest motivation is that my boss, Anna, she provided me all the documents that was necessary to let me pass from the internships. She provided all the documents of the company and also she let the general manager sign the contracts to me.

He was she was pretty; she treated me pretty nice and also you know in my working place everyone they are hard-working, but they are not, you know nature in China, we see this nature, they are not competitive viciously. You know in Chinese cultures in Chinese companies everyone they were kind of treats everyone around them as competitors. But now in my working place everyone treats each other as a friend as their important person. They kind, they help each other, even if sometimes someone gets higher salaries than them, they won't be journeyers.

But in China, no. If one of the employees have higher salaries than them, oh, they started to say some bad words to them, they kind of stabbed them in the back. That is very bad, you know, atmosphere in the Chinese company.

So that, you know, a lot of people, they kind of don't want to work because they receive a lot of pressures for the relationships because some of the employees, they are jealous to them, they don't want them to have good life, they don't want them to have good salaries, they kind of complain to them secretly and also say some bad words to them.

Let's note the colleagues. I really want to work in some place with really good colleagues rather than the competitors. I don't want to get a high salary; I just want to do my job and give the best services to the customer. I don't want to spend any time doing something that I think is useless for managing the relationship. If this person really doesn’t like me, just doesn't talk with me.

Sometimes you know in China you have had to manage it. You have had to spend more time on to managing the relationship. You know, if the relationship went bad in your working place, it will bring a lot of pressure and unhappiness to you, something like this.

Interviewer:

Thank you. And could you please describe a situation when you exceed people's expectations about you? Your colleagues or maybe your boss’s expectations?

Guest:

Yes, because while I was a waiter in my working place, I really do like to have some small talk with the customers. Even though I speak Russian so-so, they still don't think that I'm very low employees. They give me a lot of encouragement.

Actually, I was very surprised that all the Russian people, kind of speaking English very well. So, it is true that the education level of Russian people is very high, it's higher than that in China. You know while the customers were finishing their meal and they came to my place to pick up their clothes, I would like to say: hello, sir, «Было вкусно» , they would say: «Спасибо», and then I will say: «welcome to come here again». Some of my Russian customers really want to talk more with me about my experience, about their experience. I would really like to, you know, talk with them. And my boss was very surprised that I can manage the relationship between the customers and the company such goodly, because it is very necessary for us to build a long-term and good relationship with the customers.

We call this CRM management, customers relationship management. So, every time I was talking very with customers, Russian customers, my boss was very happy. And every time I saw some Russian customers left some very good reviews to me on the ESS web of our restaurants. I was so happy. Something like this.

Interviewer:

So, I see you talk a lot with new people and clients and my next question will be about it. When do you think surprised people the most about you when they see you for the first time?

Guest:

Because it is a Russian restaurant, people never thought that they would hire Chinese people to make the culture here much more diverse and people feel that I was very rare in the Russian restaurant and they can't stop to talk with me because they really want to speak with the foreigners.

I can see that the Russian people they treat everyone very good, very hospitable. Every time a lot of Russian people came to me, and they may thought that I can't speak Russian very well and they talk with me using English very actively because they really want to know me and make friends with me. Sometimes I get tips from them. I feel really happy.

And also, some Russian customers, they can't speak English very well, but I can understand what they want me to do for them. Oh, I don't know what they were talking about, but I know that I just give the clothes to them and let them pick up something from their pockets, because I can get to know that what's their intentions from the lame languages.

And sometimes they just want to smoke. I will tell them, there were some blankies by the doors. If you really want to go outside for cigarettes, you can pick up some blankies rather than your coat. Something like this.

Yeah. Language isn't the key, but sometimes you need to use it hard to get to know what they want. Something like this. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Very interesting, really you are working very well. And you're very good at giving interview, by the way, you provide so many information.

Guest:

Yeah, I'm glad to help you. If you have chance you can come to visit my restaurant also.

Interviewer:

Can you send me the name of the restaurant later, maybe?

Guest:

Yeah, no worries, and it was kind of one of the best Chinese restaurants in St. Petersburg and also one of the landmarks in St. Petersburg, something like this. Yeah, we are kind of three in one. We have the restaurant, we have the bar and also, we have the smoke zone, something like this.

Interviewer:

What do you think was the most valuable lesson you learned on your current position?

Guest:

The most valuable lesson that I think that I have learned from my working place was that you should never underestimate the occupation that you are doing with. You know sometimes some people feel like: I don't want to be a waiter because waiter is a very low skilled job, I can't learn anything from such low job occupations because it makes me a low person, but the reality isn't working this way.

Some Chinese people have a very high vanity, they like to buy luxury goods to show their data scores, and they want to be a manager in some famous companies like JP Morgan, like Citi, but sometimes you shouldn't make your expectations such high.

If you have such high expectations for your future, for your occupations, for your future careers, you have highly possibility of being disappointed if you didn't reach your course. So put your goals very low because I know my ability. Previously I also I behaved as most of the Chinese people. I want to go to the top one top 20 universities in the world and after graduation I will be a super manager in some top 100 companies in the world.

But sometimes, that isn't the future of you. Sometimes you desire very low at first. Do some, you can just divide your goals into some achievable goals and achieve the goals step by step.

Just make yourself as low as possible. Sometimes don't give too many expectations to yourself. You know, previously I also, I was seeking some manager jobs in some big company in St. Petersburg, but I failed. So, I started to make myself as low as possible to do something that I can do, but it doesn't mean that I'm a low person.

I did a great job. I love my job. It isn't that high, but I receive good salaries. I receive 70,000 rubles for one month. I receive tips every day, and I receive some love letters from the girls. I have my own surprise, you know.

You know, every day I come to my restaurant, I have surprises. I met different people. I knew new people and I get free coffee, I get a free meal, I get a free taxi back home you know sometimes you shouldn’t image yourself such perfectly just treat yourself as low as possible do some lawless job from the very beginning. This is the greatest lesson that I learned from my workplace.

Interviewer:

If one day you start your own business. Do you think it will be a restaurant or maybe something else?

Guest:

It depends on the country, I think. To have some restaurants in Russia, It is a money-making industry, but if you want to have a restaurant in China it's goanna be a problem, because nowadays China doesn't have a very good environment. A lot of the youngsters, millennials, generation Z, they are kind of having no opportunities in China because all the opportunities have been occupied by the older generations.

You know, in this year, China will have 10 million graduates, but only 10% of them, they will be able to find decent job. But 90% of the Chinese graduates, they will be confronted with unemployment. That's a serious problem.

But also, you know, China nowadays has a lot of down industries. For example, the brick and mortar and the physical stores. If I want to have a restaurant in China, I need to pay for the rent. I need to pay for the electricity, water, employees, food, everything. You know, a lot of the Chinese customers, they are very picky, they are very fastidious. You know, doing something related to this restaurant in China, you will spend all of your time doing something useless, I think. It won't make you money, but it definitely will make you lose a lot of money. So, I won't consider to have a restaurant in China, but maybe I will have some restaurants related with African food in Russia.

Because, you know, in Russia, you have never heard about the African food, right? But the African food is very popular. One of my best friends, William, cooked me a lot of Nigerian stew meat. I really like this dish. So, as far as I can see, in Russia, there isn’t any African restaurants.

I will be very glad to have some African restaurants in Russia, maybe in Yekaterinburg, maybe in Vladivostok, yeah, for these two cities, something like this.

Interviewer:

So, as far as I understand, you plan to stay in Russia for some time, even after master's degree?

Guest:

Yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer:

What do you think would be your plan for the next five years?

Guest:

It really depends on the situation, because I really want to continue to study my PhD degree of management in Russia because the Russian governments, they were very willing to provide me the full scholarship. It gives me a huge motivation because it means that I'm good students. I'm hard-working students and PhD because I like studying.

Studying turns me into a better human being, but I think I had already chosen my destination in Russia. I would be very willing to go to Yekaterinburg or Vladivostok. So Vladivostok is very near to China, and also it has very beautiful Japanese seas.

That's a good place for me to go, but also Yekaterinburg, because I really can't make the decision right now, because I had already let my best friend, Troby, who can speak five languages, I had already let my best friend to help me apply for the full scholarship of my PhD degrees.

If I got the full scholarship of my PhD degree in Yekaterinburg, I will go to Yekaterinburg. If I got that in Vladivostok, I will go to Vladivostok, something like this. So and also while I was studying my PhD degrees I will start here to do my tik-tok because I'm also I'm a blogger and also influencer in China

I will continue to do my tik-tok and make my outcomes have millions of fans so I can do some endorsements to some brands you know I can be a superstar.

Interviewer:

What do you think three the main things you need to do now to achieve what you wanted to have in five.

Guest:

I think learning Russian languages is the most important part because I the first time that I've been to Russia was in 2019 and since that I was studying the Russian language as a minor language, composed really, but I didn't pay a lot of attention to the Russian languages because I can speak English to everyone around me, so I spent most of my time on improving my English.

Nowadays, even right now, I was reading some English literature every day to remember some native expressions or something like this. But Russian is a very important language for me to grasp because if I want to live in Russia and continue to build some bond with Russian entrepreneurs, I must learn Russian because not all the Russian people can speak English.

And also, you know, in China they have very good relationship with the people, with the countries in the Middle Asia. For example, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and also Russia, Belarus, Ukraine. The Russian is the dominant language in this zone. And for example, one of my main friends in my restaurant, he's from Uzbekistan.

He likes me very much, but he can't speak English. Every time he was saying something like, Hi, how are you? And he was worried about whether I'm hungry or not. He treated me very well. I really want to talk with him, but I can't speak Russian.

So that's a pity. So in the future, Russian is the main thing that I need to improve. Because if I want to have business in Russia and in some Middle East, Middle Asia countries, I must learn Russian. Something like this.

Interviewer:

How do you respond to critics?

Guest:

Critics?

Interviewer:

Critics, yes.

Guest:

I think I have been scolded and criticized a lot. I think if someone, especially your boss, criticized you, you should accept it. Everyone will be negative, they will somehow have some negative emotions with regard to the critics, but the critics can improve your behaviors.

You must know that something isn't appropriate for you to do, because the first time if you make mistakes, you got scolded, that's totally fine because you don't know anything, But I'm the person that won't make the same mistake again. I can make a lot of mistakes, but different mistakes, I won't make the same mistake again. That's very important.

And sometimes you should be very critic-thinking, you know. Getting scolded isn't your problem. And you should appreciate the critics from the others because they are helping you. They are saving you. You know, in China we have an old saying that if you want to destroy a person, just say glorious words to him or her for every day.

He will be drowned into himself or herself and he will continue to die because of his mistake. He doesn’t know his mistake. It is a it is a good way for you to know your own mistakes because actually I think the mistakes make people grow up make people a better person something like this, so you should be appreciative to all the mistakes that you have done.

You know, sometimes I feel that I made a lot of mistakes in the past, and sometimes I can’t reconcile with myself perfectly because I felt that I was totally a failure.

No, because not least, I was very thankful for all the mistakes, for all the experiences that I had in my life, because without this, I can't be myself right now, something like this.

Interviewer:

So you always learn something from your mistakes and from critics to develop yourself, right?

Guest:

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer:

Good. And would you personally prefer to work alone or in a team?

Guest:

I think I prefer to work in a team. Sometimes I don't want to be overloaded because previously. I was in a team and my teammates did nothing and I do all the home assignments by myself and they get the scores with no efforts dedicated.

I was very angry for this, because it has no difference with working by yourself, but you kind of let someone get some scores that doesn't belong to them. But right now, you see, I really like to work in the team with some hard-working teammates. They are dividing the task equally and they can help you and sometimes, you know, working in a team can help you to know each other better, can help you work collaboratively with others.

You know, working in a team is very important because in China we say that you can't do everything alone by yourself. But you have to get used to working in team because right now I only do value exchange and effective communications.

Value exchange is the preliminary stage of value of working in a team. You need to use other people's advantages to achieve your goals, and you need to give them some benefits. Something like this. The value exchange is a very important tool for you to be successful because it is too weak for you to do everything alone by yourself.

It's better to collaborate with others who have the valuable values that you can use. Something like this.

Interviewer:

Even in best teams sometimes there are conflicts. How do you manage conflicts with your co-workers or teammates?

Guest:

From my personal perspective if we want to win together I can let you win more you know sometimes 50/50 isn't a good deal I can get 30 you get 70 percent something like this but conflicts means that we have some unsatisfications between each other, so we need to solve this. Because if the conflicts existed, that means both of us, have problems. So, we need to point out the problems first. For example, if it is my problem, I was too emotional, oh, I need to change, I need to manage my emotions.

But this is also your problem. You were debating with me for all the time. This is your problem. You also need to change. You know, we need, both of us, we need to change.

No, if the if the conflicts existed, which means both of us, they need to make some change and improve the models that we were getting along with each other, something like this.

Interviewer:

Let's come to our last section of questions for this interview. What does work life balance mean to you?

Guest:

Work-life balance. Sometimes the balance doesn't exist at all, because right now I am working full-time. Every time when I get back home, I don't even have the time to wash my clothes, to eat. I just want to sleep. Sometimes, for me, I need to sacrifice life first and dedicate everything to the work, because it isn't that easy to get money.

If you want to get the work-life balance, you need to be financially independent first. But if you are not financially independent first, then you need to sacrifice one. Everyone are sacrificing life right now to get more money from the work. Not only me, but everybody does the same.

Interviewer:

How do you handle stress or tight deadlines? Are you good in time management?

Guest:

I can't say that I'm good in time management, but at least I'm a responsible guy. As long as it's a task dedicated from my boss or for my teachers. I will do it. Before the deadlines. You know, I'm not a person that makes plans. I do everything very casually. So, I kind of catch up the deadlines, you know, at the last day or something like this.

I'm a guy like this. But it depends on the person. I really want to say that because I don't like to make plans, because I know that every day, there will be a lot of unexpected things to happen. Making plans, I don't think it's very important for me. If I made plans, I woold have to change my plans for everything.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much for participating in the interview. These are all questions. You gave pretty a lot of information.

Guest:

I hope I really do help you with your projects.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much. Have a nice day.

Guest:

You too.