

Tinyshiny Miniature Cooking: Can it Have a More Effective Social Media Presence?

Nirali Shah

XIM University, India
Email: nirali [at]xim[dot]edu[dot]in

Abstract

Tinyshiny Miniature Cooking is YouTube Channel. As the name suggests, the cookery channel uses toy-size utensils and cooking gadgets to prepare recipes in a small quantity. It uses innovative ideas and attractive presentations to showcase the recipes despite its miniature format. Being one of the newer channels, it has a limited viewership. The creator of the channel is deliberating the possibility of monetizing soon. For this purpose, she needs advice on identifying the right audience and creating an effective social media presence.

Key words: *social media, Youtube Channel, Cookery, target audience, social media engagement.*

Introduction

Looking out through the window on a quiet evening on 1 April 2022, Ms. Sonal Shah, the creator of Tinyshiny Miniature Cooking (TSMC), was immersed in her thoughts on the achievements of the last nine months and the road that lay ahead. TSMC was launched as a YouTube channel along with Instagram and Facebook accounts (**See exhibits 1, 2, and 3**). Sonal was aware that the progress achieved so far, though significant for a small-town person, was still very little compared to her abilities and expectations. TSMC, her brainchild, was close to her heart. Although, viewers appreciated the conceptualization of the show and innovativeness in her cooking methods, the number of viewers was quite low. It was but natural that like other channel creators, Sonal wanted to monetize her YouTube channel. It is for this purpose that she seeks the help of the social media savvy but rookie management stalwarts.

About Ms Sonal Shah:

Sonal is the eldest daughter of a business family. She was born and brought up in a joint family. Since her pre-teen days, she had helped her mother and aunts in the kitchen. At that young age, she found it extremely challenging to ensure the usage of the right spices in the right amount for a large family. She had always wondered whether learning it in small portions on her toy kitchen set

would have been more comfortable and convenient for a beginner. Years passed by and she became an expert at cooking. She participated in various cookery competitions and had reached the final level of the regional version of Master Chef, *Rasoi ni Maharani* twice. The first time was in season six of ETV Gujarati and the second time was in season seven of Colors Gujarati. She also participated in various cookery shows on television. Since 2019, she had been regularly contributing to Colors Gujarati channel's Rasoi Show which was a daily programme. The editorial team of the Rasoi Show would decide and convey the theme for a particular episode. Based on that, she would determine her recipes and include some innovative ingredients to create a unique taste. Due to her expertise in cooking, several clubs and organizations invited her to judge cooking competitions at the local and regional levels.

However, while training her teenage children, she found them confronting the same problem of measuring out ingredients in the right proportion that she herself had faced as a teenager. The idea of miniature cooking lay mulling in her mind for some time.

The Creation of Tinyshiny Miniature Cooking (TSMC)

Few years back, Sonal received some pottery sets from her in-laws and parental family. While unpacking the stuff, she found a set of small cups and saucers. She learnt that her in-laws' family had carried it with them from Rangoon, Burma (today's Myanmar) while migrating during the second world war. It was tiny, dainty and attractive and the best thing about it was that it was usable. While Sonal had been thinking of miniature cooking, this discovery of crockery made miniature cooking possible not just as a mock-real playtime but with real ingredients. While the pandemic year 2020 delayed the eventual launch of the TSMC YouTube channel, but she used the time to work on her ideas. She used the time to collect tiny utensils and crockery and create small but usable gadgets (See Exhibit 4).

She passed the word round to everyone in her family and friends to collect or let her know where to collect small but functional utensils. She even contacted the scrap-buyers to look for such items. She fervently searched online e-market sites to get utensils used in region specific dishes such as miniature idli steamer. She beautifully decorated the small crockery, cutlery and utensils in a glass cupboard, but she ensured using them rather than keeping them as showpieces.

Sonal now wanted to acquire miniature but ready-to-use electronic gadgets such as refrigerators, mixer-grinders, microwaves, ovens, blenders, etc. However, most of them were not available in the Indian market. At the same time procuring them from USA and Europe also was not a financially prudent option. She shared her ideas with her close relatives, and they converted toys into real gadgets by using soldering machines, grills, etc. As the collage suggests, she converted toy

microwave oven and OTG into working appliances, made small mitti ka choolha (clay stove), and a clay grinder.

After all these endeavours and much contemplation, Ms Sonal Shah launched the Tinyshiny Miniature Cooking as a YouTube Channel, Instagram account, and Facebook page in July 2021. Her first recipe, restaurant style Palak Paneer and Roti video was uploaded the same month. In her first video, Ms. Shah propagated the farm to fork concept (**See exhibit 5**). Interestingly, Sonal had multiple talents and was adept at cooking, gardening, dress designing, interior designing, arts & crafts, etc. She used many of those skills while conceptualizing the background set and music score, deciding the recipes, and bringing innovative ingredients for creating TSMC's videos.

While Ms. Shah started TSMC as a solution to the problems faced by her teenage children, some admirers felt that a tiny bite was the right choice for health-conscious people, people on a strict diet, and those with health concerns. At the same time, cooking has become an essential skill for many young adults who go to different cities or countries for higher studies or career purposes. They want to cook efficiently, safely, and quickly to have their favorite delicacy in home-style even while being away from home. Most singles or beginners would make a more considerable portion of food that would last 2-3 days. They would consume a little and store the extra food in the refrigerator to save time and effort. On the other hand, conventional Indian families do not appreciate frozen foods as they consider them stale foods. The dislike is due to cultural and social taboos and climatic conditions. Thus, making food in small portions is a healthier alternative for young adults. TSMC guided them to make their favorite, tasty, fresh food in small quantities.

The Farm-to-fork Concept of TMC

A constant concern and query of the viewers were how does one get vegetables of small size. During the lockdown during the pandemic, many people revived their kitchen garden hobbies to avoid going to crowded places, to get fresh vegetables, and to spend their free time effectively (e.g., Bhavani 2020). Ms. Shah was one of those enthusiastic individuals. She had ornamental plants on the terrace and balcony but added kitchen garden plants such as brinjal, chilly, spinach, cherry tomato, curry leaves, etc. A kitchen garden in a typical household would usually have a small harvest. Such a small quantity would have been insufficient for a big family of 7-8 members, but it was a blessing for miniature cooking. It ensured that there was no wastage of home-produced vegetables. TSMC was very keen to promote the farm to fork concept to reduce dependence on the market. Ms. Shah cannot just rely upon the produce of a kitchen garden due to the seasonal nature. It is an arduous task to get them in tiny quantities, and a lucky one gets it.

As a mother, Sonal had faced the eternal dilemma about what to would be the menu. Similarly, as a chef, she faced the dilemma of what recipes to prepare and share. There were many popular chefs and cookery channels with a huge number of subscribers. Even as a miniature cooking channel, it was not the only on Youtube. How could she break the clutter and differentiate her channel? What was unique about TSMC among the plethora of cooking channels? How could she break the clutter and differentiate her channel?

Most of the existing channel, especially the miniature food media, were not exclusively for vegetarian dishes. Member of one of the local food groups commented to her that Tinyshiny was the first miniature cooking channel exclusively for vegetarian recipes that coming from the Western part of India. However, Ms. Shah left it to the audience's judgment and avoided commenting. The broad decision of being a vegetarian cookery channel had been of course made, what remained to be answered was what type of dishes to prepare? What should be the focus of TSMC in identifying the recipes such as regional taste, cuisines from all the genres, quick to prepare, easy to prepare, delicious to eat, or having creative ingredients? To begin with, TSMC had introduced dishes from North India, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, South Indian apart from international cuisines such as Italian, Indo-Chinese, Continental, and Desserts (**see exhibit 6**).

Despite the wide ranging choice of recipes, few things that were common across all the recipes:

- Video time (somewhere between 4 and 9 minutes).
- Earful soundtrack.
- Eye-catching background set.
- A plethora of tiny utensils.
- Toy-size real gadgets.

Sonal mentioned in an informal conversation that she and her team took a few hours to create a video and at least a day to edit it. In contrast she spent more time, at least a week trying out various ingredients to make a recipe unique yet authentic. It further took a few days to conceptualize the decor. The current statistics suggest that viewers' attention span was between 8 and 12 seconds, depending on their age group (Bump 2021). However, the same viewers did not mind watching the entire video if it suited their passion, hobbies, or interests (Cesarz 2021). Sonal was still contemplating what would be an ideal time for a video to capture the audience's attention. Would a trailer of 10 seconds help TSMC to entice the audience's interest and increase the viewership? Engaging the audience in a social media age was important, what would engage the audience?

The Road Ahead:

More importantly, Sonal was wondering what should be the target audience for TSMC? Social media audience includes customers, consumers, and followers. Customers buy the product, consumers use (tryout dishes), and followers view the recipes. A true chef not only wants viewers to see their recipes but also people to try those recipes. She wanted consumers to share the stories of their attempts and raise their queries. Youngsters, especially Gen Zers, tend to engage in conversations and share their content on their Twitter handles or Instagram stories (Sarika 2022). Most youngsters might have spent more time building their careers in the competitive world than knowing how to prepare delicious foods. There was a possibility that many might not be aware of the ingredients and their quantum. Should TSMC then focus on the novice cook or those who have been cooking for a while? If one looks at the comments on the TSMC YouTube channel, one can identify few categories of viewers - novice but passionate to learn, curious viewers, pros in cooking, and pros in cooking plus presenting. For the beginner young adult, perhaps an interactive game or chat could be a good idea to suggest what ingredients to use and what quantity to use. But for the creative and the passionate cook that Sonal was cooking was an art. Would the creation of an app or a game make it monotonous? Chefs, whether professionals or otherwise, decided the actual ingredients based on their availability, and practice teaches them about the right proportion. The addition or deletion of some ingredients had more to do with the person's creativity and availability of those elements at the actual cooking time. The novice wants more hand-holding and sharing of the precise proportion, whereas those who cook for a few years would wish for more creativity in terms of ingredients and presentation. When a chef wants more consumers trying out their recipes, a YouTube channel owner would also want more followers. They may not try the recipes, but they increase the visibility and reputation (Atherton 2020, 51). There was a constant dilemma on whom to focus and to target the right social media segments.

After five months of active efforts, TSMC had taken a strategic break barring a mouth-watering Veg Sizzler recipe. TSMC wants to return powerfully and effectively. It is keen to monetize the channel at the earliest. For monetization purposes, it requires a drastic increase in the viewers, likes, comments, and subscribers. It needs active engagement and visibility to increase the traffic on its YouTube channel. Ms. Shah and TSMC look for your help devising the social media planning framework and engagement strategies for the right target audience.

Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Screenshot of the YouTube Channel

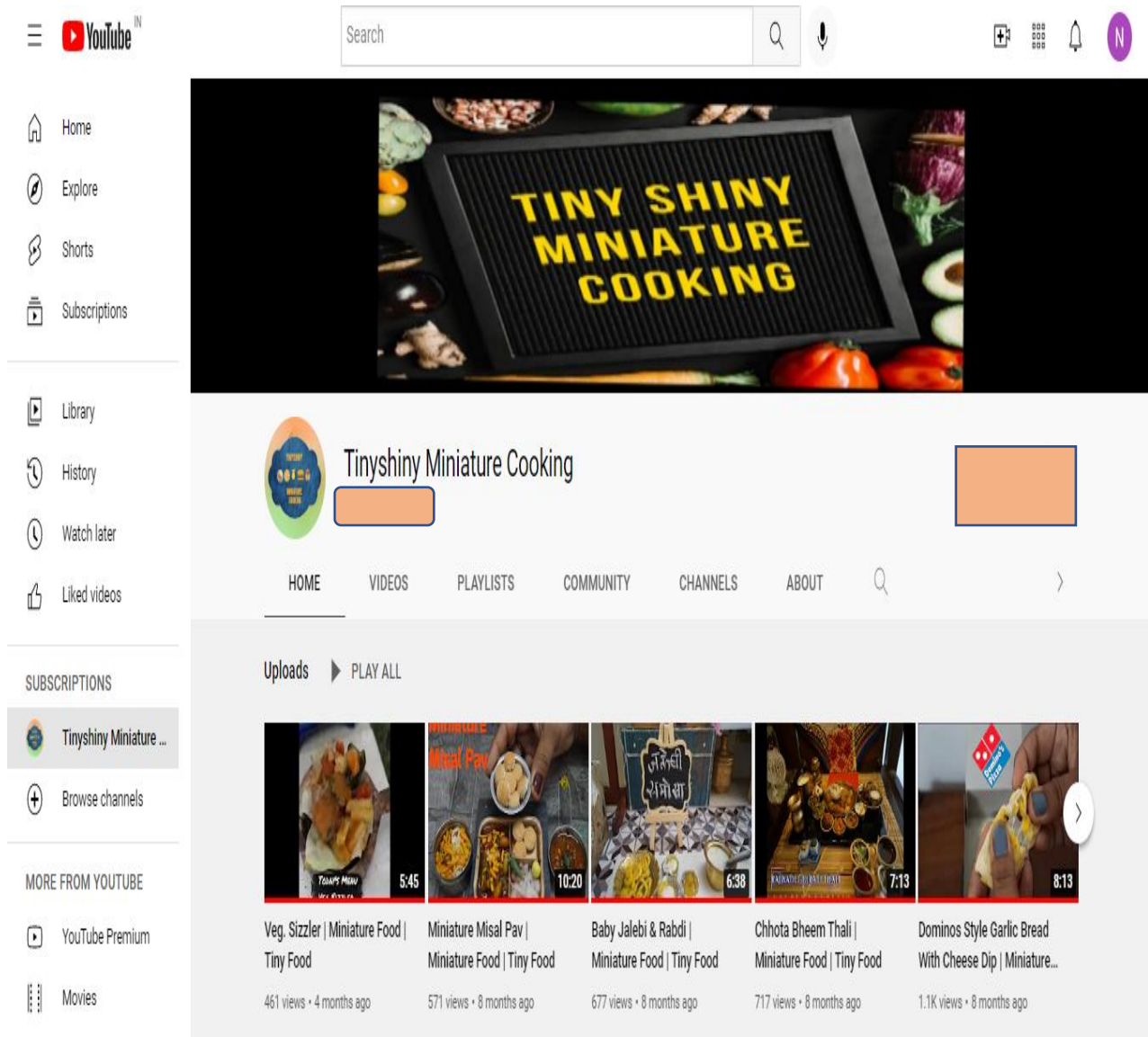
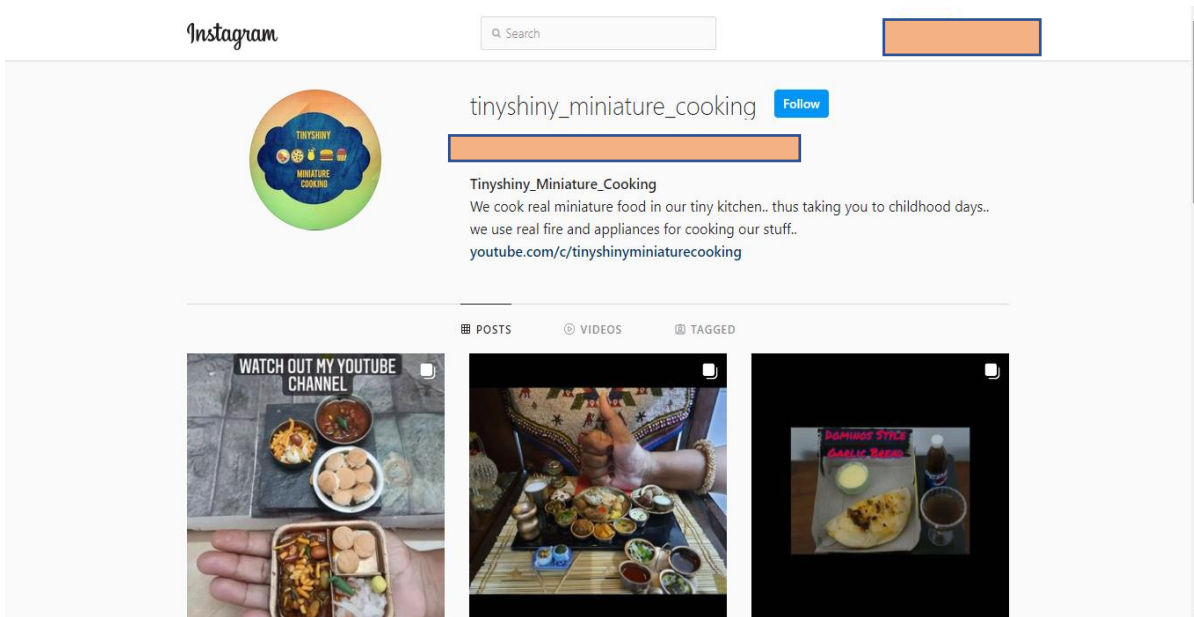


Exhibit 2: The Channels Instagram Account



Source: https://www.instagram.com/tinyshiny_miniature_cooking/?utm_medium=copy_link

Exhibit 2: TSMC’s Facebook Page



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Tinyshiny-Mini/100073027189376/>

Exhibit 4: *Tiny Appliances and Utensils***Exhibit 5: *Farm to Fork Concept***

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xnoPfNnPrE> (Captured somewhere between 00.20 and 00.47 minutes)

Exhibit 6: Diversity of cuisine covered by TSMC

Type of cuisine	Name of recipe	Link of recipe
North Indian	Palak Paneer	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xnoPfNnPrE
Rajasthani	Dal bati	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_HGOrakhSc&t=118s
Maharashtrian	Modak	https://youtu.be/CYu67PhjV2Q
South Indian	Idli, sambar, chutney	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM4eF2RvIV4
Gujarati	Chhota Bheem thali	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TF5vkoqMMkQ&t=7s
Italian	Garlic bread	https://youtu.be/SCrvOVYXupE
	Veg lasagna	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6It6TdgecA
Indo Chinese	Dragon potato	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_QvhbEKSlo
Continental	Barbecue	https://youtu.be/RQI8OhTo9yI
	Veg sizzler	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwU9Tp7nLc0&t=160s
Desserts	Rabdi	https://youtu.be/ArmPewE9aAI
	Jalebi	

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