

# SYNERGIES BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA FEATURES AND USER ENGAGEMENT TO ENHANCE ONLINE BRAND VISIBILITY - A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Anuradha Goswami<sup>1\*</sup>, S. Vijayakumar Bharathi<sup>2</sup>, R. Raman<sup>3</sup>, Apoorva Kulkarni<sup>4</sup>, Shaji Joseph<sup>5</sup>, Bhooshan Kelkar<sup>6</sup>

MBA – Information Technology in Business Management  
Symbiosis International University (SIU)  
Symbiosis Centre for Information Technology (SCIT)  
P-15, Pune Infotech Park, Hinjawadi, Pune - 411 057, India  
Tel.: +91 20 2293 4308 / 09 / 10 Extn: 117  
Pune India

[anuradha@scit.edu](mailto:anuradha@scit.edu)  
[svkbharathi@scit.edu](mailto:svkbharathi@scit.edu)  
[director@scit.edu](mailto:director@scit.edu)  
[apoorva@scit.edu](mailto:apoorva@scit.edu)  
[shaji@scit.edu](mailto:shaji@scit.edu)

<sup>6</sup>Country Manager, IBM India University Relations  
IBM Master Inventor, IBM India Pvt. Ltd, Bangalore, India  
[bhkelkar@in.ibm.com](mailto:bhkelkar@in.ibm.com)

**Abstract - Organizations today are fast realizing the impact of social media as a significant business driver for capitalizing the advantages on certain key strategic issues like user engagement and brand visibility. Integrating social media characteristics is one of the key differentiators for enhancing online brand visibility. Though a lot of research has been made on the social media usability and user engagement, the uniqueness of this research paper is the identification of synergies between the features of social media and user engagement to enhance online brand visibility. In this paper a conceptual model is explained by developing a social media-user engagement matrix to explain the synergies. The matrix integrates four parameters of User Engagement namely Involvement, Interaction, Intimacy and Influence with four Social Media characteristics namely Content, Relationship, Value and Structure to bring out the essence of interoperability. This paper has identified and listed certain metrics for measuring the online brand visibility. We believe that the outcome of this paper will make significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge by uniquely identifying and explaining the ‘social media-user engagement synergy’ and also listing appropriate metrics for measuring online brand visibility.**

**Keyword: Web 2.0, Social Media, User Engagement, Online Brand Visibility, Synergy-Matrix**

## I. Introduction

Searching the web has become a reliable, convenient and powerful tool for the business community [1]. In today's competitive environment irrespective of the nature, size and demography of businesses, the question is how critical it is for businesses to communicate timely information more dynamically, interactively, creatively and reliably. The answer is from Web 2.0. However organizations have to take note of the challenges that are two-fold while adopting Web 2.0. The challenges due to Social Computing Aspect of Web 2.0 arise because Web 2.0 is social due to its collaborative and participative nature. The challenge of total prediction and controllability appears to be imminent, typically internal to an organization. These challenges are readiness both cultural and technological, control and governance, justification of social media investment and ensuring adoption. How do we plan to meet out these challenges? Organizations need to go in for an iterative adoption model in short range implementation cycles. In other words the iterative model prescribes defining the scope for all iterations and focusing on the next level of implementation by carefully selecting the Web 2.0 functionalities required to fulfill the desired objectives.

The McKinsey global survey in November 2011, on the benefits of Web 2.0 to businesses revealed some interesting findings. The study found that there is an increasing adoption and usage of Web 2.0 technologies by

the organization mainly for three reasons. They are inter-organizational communication, customer communication and communication with stakeholders which includes suppliers, partners and experts. The study also found the high interest areas of using Web 2.0 were to bring out innovative products and services, effective and customer driven marketing, better and faster access to knowledge and cost competitiveness resulting in higher revenues. Moreover it was found that Web 2.0 technologies enabled companies to create network amongst its stakeholders to foster closer and transparent collaboration [2].

Today from a brand visibility perspective, analysis of social media data like forums and blogs are especially relevant because the discussion content created and circulated is based on experience of the individuals. Casalo et al (2010) found that the social media platform enables faster and timely capture of such experiences about a particular brand be it a product or a service. The discussion can not only inform but also influence existing and prospective customers about the brand. In addition the social media communication serves as an electronic word-of-mouth to enhance or reduce the visibility of the brand [3]

We believe that enhancing the user experience on the website is today the most critical driver of business promotion. In today's social media enabled environments there are numerous ways in which one can optimize the efficiency of the website by capitalizing on the advantages of social media features. However, the challenge still exists in how to bring about the collaboration of social media richness into the company's website. Here the aspect of enriching the customer's online experience becomes imperative. This involves engaging the users in the website with enriched contents, products and services and medium of direct and personalized or customized interactions. The customized user experience will not only invoke immediate response on his experience to the company, but also motivate the user to propagate the experience on a broader and faster horizon through social media. This enables a valuable link between the company's website and the social media, thereby triggering a user-empowered promotional strategy for example online advertising and e-mail marketing by user-groups.

A good amount of literature is available from articles, white papers from corporate, blogs and forums on social media, online visibility and user engagement. However, we found that there is gap in research on the development of an interoperable model for identifying and explaining the synergies of social media features and user engagement on online brand visibility. Hence this paper is an attempt to substantiate the existing literature and bring out a conceptual framework for the interoperability of social media and user engagement towards enhancing the online brand visibility.

### **A. Research Question**

How can online brand visibility be enhanced through synergies of Social Media characteristic features and user engagement practices?

### **B. Research Objectives**

1. To identify and define the principles of online brand visibility (OBV).
2. To identify and explain the synergies between social media features and user engagement for enhancing the OBV.
3. To define certain appropriate metrics for evaluating the OBV.

The outcome of this paper can significantly contribute to the existing body of knowledge by explaining the synergies of social media and user engagement and its impact on online brand visibility. The next section explains the theoretical background of the concepts namely Social Media characteristic features, User Engagement, and Online Brand Visibility. The third section of the paper explains the matrix to bring out the interoperability or synergies of the concepts explained in section two and lists out certain metrics for evaluating the interoperability. The last section concludes and sets the future scope of work in this direction.

## **II. Theoretical Background**

### **A. Social Media Characteristic Features**

User-generated content is an important feature of social media. The year 2005, saw the advent of "User Generated Content" which included all forms of media information including digital video, blogging, podcasting, forums, review-sites, social networking, mobile phone photography and wikis. The sum total of all the ways in which people use social media can be called as User Generated Content. Social media is a group internet-based application that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.

Social Media fosters association with the existing and the prospective user-groups. In other words, the relationship building can happen more effectively between the company and the social media. Over the last 15 years a lot has been researched upon the concept of how companies can enhance their relationship with customers and prospects. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), Commitment and trust are considered as key drivers for relationship between businesses and its customers [4]. It has become imperative for businesses to

capture and participate in the ongoing interactions with and amongst the customers from the viewpoint of relationship marketing. This is enabled by social media.

Social media brings value to the business by developing relationship between the brand and the networking community online. To track, monitor and maintain relationship with the customer it is critical for companies to be a part of the network itself so as to understand the pulse of its customers and position marketing strategies proactively rather than being reactive. Streaming is a way of focusing the right group online with the appropriate social networking services. An empowered relationship is required to be established on a B2C level. There are certain key reasons for such relationship which can include brand building, contacts generation, business development etc.

#### B. User Engagement

There is a phenomenon which is deliberately used by the companies to orient the customers towards their website. It is referred to as User engagement which stresses on the extent to which a company website could retain the customers with quality content. According to Brian Haven et al (2008) for the Forrester research, user engagement is described through four "I"s: involvement, interaction, intimacy and influence. Involvement describes the measure of presence of a person in the website through number of visitors and average time spent. Interaction captures the action of a user captured by the online transaction details, uploading photos and videos. Intimacy explains the attraction or aversion of the user towards the website. This is judged by satisfaction rating, sentiment analysis in blogs, comments, surveys and questionnaires. Influence measures the likelihood of the user in sending invitation to others to join, by forwarding contents from the site, which is referred to as e-WOM (electronic Word of Mouth). The research has also identified certain metrics in each of the four aspects of User Engagement [5]. These metrics is used in the third section of this paper for developing the measurement validation template.

Customer engagement depicts a one-way relationship with the brand website wherein the user is engaged or related to the website. This relationship has got a subject and an object of engagement. The subjects are the customers, both prospective and detractors with the brand. The object of engagement denotes the relationship of the subject with the brand/product. The kind of engagement i.e. whether positively or negatively engaged with a website, can be analyzed by tracking the emotions and loyalty of a user towards the brand. The degree of this positive or negative engagement could be low or high. A higher value indicates high involvement of users in the website which is desirable for the company point of view [6].

#### C. Online Brand Visibility

Drèze and Zufryden (2003), in their study on the measurement of online visibility and its impact on internet traffic emphasized the significance of online visibility. One of the key findings of the study was online visibility strongly relates and allows the prediction of web site traffic. It was found that online visibility had more significant impact on the traffic generation than advertising spending or awareness. The study identified certain key determinants of online visibility namely, advertising, search engines, other websites, news reports, chat rooms and emails. Using these determinants the study illustrated how a website's online visibility can be evaluated in order to effectively measure a company's position in the internet in relation to its competitors and also to reconcile its strengths and weaknesses. The study also suggested specific means of enhancing online visibility through the placement of links on other sites, use of keywords, and position of links on a search result page and within the result page [7]

In the competitive space of the internet it is not only hard to establish an online presence but also harder to maintain a positive brand image sustaining over a period of time. A lot of time and effort goes into creating a brand visibility and equity online. This online brand visibility (OBV) is an outcome of establishing trust with the company's target audience. Online brand visibility starts with the quality of the content that is put into the company's website. The quality should be measured by trust which is a result of the benefit the target audience or information seekers from the website is expected to get. Social media today can strengthen the quality of content by producing highly interactive and content-rich blog spots, videos, articles, white papers, customer case studies. Each one of these should be allowed to be reacted upon by users by not just reading and commenting, but also liking, and sharing through the social media space. This will win the trust of the target audience and the search engines can establish the brand identity. The more the number of followers the more is the influence of a personality in the social media space. Brand visibility for the company can be brightened by establishing a relationship with the influential personality who can blog, tweet or comment about the company in the social media space.

#### D. Conceptual Model

Based on the objectives of the study and also the underlying theoretical explanation of the concepts of User Engagement, Social Media Features and Online Brand Visibility, we propose a conceptual model which is given in Figure 1. This model is the foundation and forms the core of our paper and in the subsequent section the

synergies or interoperability of User Engagement and Social Media Features are explained in light of enhancing online brand visibility.

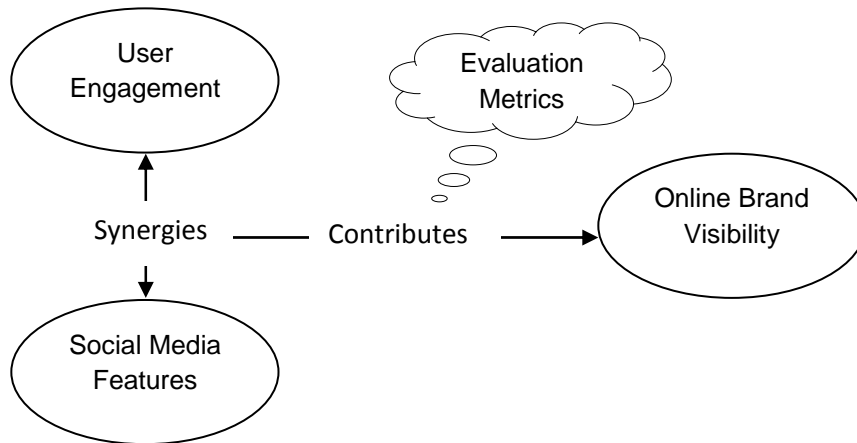


Figure 1: Conceptual Model on Synergies of User Engagement & Social Media

III. Social Media-User Engagement Synergy Matrix (SM-UE Synergy Matrix)

In this section, we have developed a matrix to explain the theoretical model explained earlier. The social media-user engagement synergy matrix has two coordinates namely the User Engagement and Social Media Features given in Table 1 below. Through the literature on theoretical foundation we have identified certain parameters on which the synergy between the two constructs are explained towards enhancing the online brand visibility. The columns comprise of four parameters that explain User Engagement namely Involvement, Interaction, Intimacy and Influence. The rows consist of four parameters that explain the Social Media characteristic features namely Content, Relationship, Value and Structure.

Table 1  
SM-UE Synergy Matrix

	Involvement (1)	Interaction (2)	Intimacy (3)	Influence (4)
Content (A)	1A	2A	3A	4A
Relationship (B)	1B	2B	3B	4B
Value (C)	1C	2C	3C	4C
Structure (D)	1D	2D	3D	4D

All the 16 cells forming part of the matrix has been explained by extensively referring to the existing research literature on each pair of coordinate to bring out the synergetic relationship towards building online brand visibility. At the end of each group (1A to 1D ...4A to 4D) the previously explained conceptual model is fine-tuned to incorporate certain validating synergy elements. A table with the possible evaluation metrics is given which can be used for validating the impact of synergy element on online brand visibility.

A. Social Media Content and User Involvement on OBV (1A)

The degree of user involvement is one of the key differentiators and drivers of the Web 2.0 revolution. As part of the Web 2.0 environment, social media facilitates a high degree of user involvement on the basis of the time spent and active participation by the user. The basis for time spent and activities performed is dependent on the functionality of the social media known as creation and use of user-created content. With easy and convenient generation of content, user is able to exercise freedom of action and expression through the social media. The very context of social media influences the possibilities of user involvement through the publication of persistent content created by users and developers. The interesting feature of Web 2.0 is that it leaves an electronic trail on the users activities, with regard to what they click, what they search for, what they select and how they navigate on a web site. These actions can all be collected and quantified for consolidation. Product

developers can use this log statistics to fine-tune their services and product offerings [8]. The participatory user-created content can play a crucial role in the development of newer and feature-rich services and products [9]. This serves as a good insight for product markets and brand experts. The perception on brands also serves as a good platform of involving the users to actively participate and transcend to newer levels like brand advocates and empowered word-of-mouth specialist of a brand etc. Brand visibility online today depends strongly on how social media supports creation of user defined content and user involvement.

#### *B. Social Media relationship and User Involvement on OBV (1B)*

Organization can garner good opportunities by integrating social media into the innovation process. The percolation of social media in different forms of user groups has supported the increased user involvement through which today organization strive for better engagement with their customers. With such opportunities comes the challenge of how to engage the users in the processes. Anna Ståhlbröst, (2012) identified the challenges in a study on the students in planning and executing user involvement process through social media were relating to the selection of the social software for use, the timing of involvement activities, theme of the innovation being developed, maturity level of innovation, vibrant communication with users, commitment of the process and nature of user feedback [10]. We believe that if due considerations are given to these factors; social media can foster long-lasting relationship between the user and the brand there by intensifying the user involvement.

Albina Itshkoki, (2011) studied the relevance of social media on consumers' purchasing decision of pharmaceuticals. It was found that pharmaceutical marketers are using social media frequently than traditional advertising. Social media was used as a platform for advertising and relating the brand to help diabetes patients manage and monitor their conditions by pharmaceutical companies. Relationship with patients through social media enabled these companies to listen and track view points and ideas, build association and sustain more intense and personal connections with patients. The medium's inherent ability to enable pharmaceutical firms to hear points of view and ideas, build relationships and sustain deeper, more personal connections; however the study found that the uncontrolled nature of social media conversation posed regulatory concerns as well [11].

#### *C. Social Media value and User Involvement on OBV (1C)*

The value of social media depends on how companies are able to generate vibrancy in conversations that can result in successful word-of-mouth marketing by the users of the social media. The value of Word-of-mouth marketing depends on the nature of information which is expected to be transparent, trustworthy, and persuasive [12].

It has always been a question to organization on how to achieve a life time value from social media efforts in brand promotion and marketing. New concepts like "earned media" and "paid media" is the new avenues of research. While the traditional efforts are routed through the latter, social media efforts relate to the former which is known as the "earned media". In this earned media environment companies have to earn their audience attention and trust in order to justify their brand's value proposition. Of course, investment in paid advertisements can extend the brand's reach, but they will perform only if value is created to the community. Today social media is believed to a strong enabler of creating value by engaging the user to talk about the brand. In the earned media, users enjoy the freedom to choose and participate in the topics of interest by joining groups in LinkedIn, liking and becoming fans of brand pages on Facebook, tweet and react actively by re-tweeting, and share content they find worth sharing. Promotional event planners can develop cost effective yet valuable content for their events by tracking the involvement of user over the brand. Some of the factors that can churn out the value from social media based on user involvement are demographics (age, gender, geographic location, nationality etc), key words and phrases (job titles/functions, industry terms, user groups), interests, social behaviours (degree and depth of participation in discussions, forums, content generation, sharing etc) [13].

#### *D. Social Media structure and User Involvement on OBV (1D)*

The technical structure that supports social media should be taken into consideration so as to accommodate the broad horizon of services expected to be fulfilled through social media space. A compatible technical infrastructure to support the social media contribution will accommodate all forms of participation thereby increasing the probability of loyalty to the site. The participation in the social media community should be tracked in order to identify its strengths and weakness and suitably positioning the content for the company's brand building. Updating the technical and organizational infrastructure will enhance collaboration and support regular review of community activities in the social media space [14]. We believe that reviewing and aligning to the social media structural requirements will enhance the involvement of user groups or communities. This will result in more intense collaboration between the company and the communities towards bettering the brand visibility online.

Based on the above explanations we define the synergies of Social Media (SM) and User Engagement (UE) as 'Brand Involvement and Commitment' (SMUE<sub>1</sub>) which will be a measure of Online Brand Visibility (OBV). The parameters that summarize SMUE<sub>1</sub> are Rich Content Building (CI<sub>1</sub>), Empowering Relationships (RI<sub>1</sub>),

Transparent and Trustworthy e-WOM ( $VI_1$ ), and Structural Review and Alignment ( $SI_1$ ). Figure 2 given below presents the diagrammatic representation

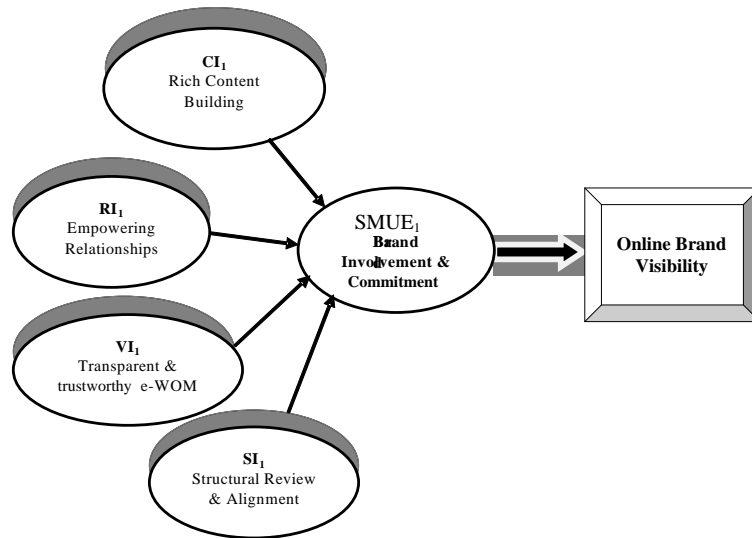


Figure 2: Synergies of User Involvement and Social Media

The OBV measure defined above can be measured through a set of metrics. This measurement will bring out the practical and empirical relevance of the measure convincingly to the companies. The measure and the relevant metrics are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2  
OBV Measurement Template for  $SMUE_1$

OBV Measure	Metrics
Brand involvement & Commitment ( $SMUE_1$ )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of unique site visitors</li> <li>• TV Ad impressions</li> <li>• Website Page Views</li> <li>• Time spent per page</li> <li>• In-Store visits (online)</li> </ul>

*E. Social Media Content and User Interaction on OBV (2A)*

Deon et al (2012), in their research study on the social media faces of McLaren Vale Wineries found that the interaction of users can be analyzed by linking the social media content to sites such as Socialmention.com. The interaction data constitutes the data which is used to construct the Socialmention dimension scores [15]. It becomes evident that today companies can analyze interaction data readily to provide valuable insights on the interactions by the user about a brand, product or service.

Consumers today are abandoning their traditional passive role as recipients of brand-developed content and are exercising control over the interactions by way of messages they receive, generate and share. The research on implementing social media strategies also found that inclusion in social media and consumer participation in social media marketing strategies can generate diversified interactions which can enable marketers to understand the pulse of the market for their brand. Moreover, such participation can build brand loyalty which ultimately results in the buying decision of the user [16]. The study found that participation and inclusion reinforces the connection between the users and the brand through personal interaction. We believe that this reinforcement will enhance the brand visibility.

*F. Relationship in Social Media and User Interaction on OBV (2B)*

Brand visibility today over the online environment depends on certain key parameters like interaction process, a planned communication process which supports and strengthens relationships and the creation of value [17]. Obviously social media provides all these three parameters. Using social media, the concept of ‘network society’ provides immense potential for brands and companies to develop interactions and relationship with consumers [18]. The concept of relationship marketing is grounded on shared communications. We have already known user-generated-content (UGC) is being used by companies to track the user experiences with the brand [19]. We believe that this practice is redefining the relationship between the consumers and the companies. The value of brand depends on the worth and content of relationships and the interactions that get

generated through the relationships. From a traditional monologue based communication model, social media has enabled a dialogue mode of communication [20].

In the research paper on netiquette guide for social media interaction by Cambre, it was observed that interaction in social media is happening at a personal level. The study identified four different steps for social media interactions towards building a relationship with the audience. They are Listen, Prepare, Engage and Measure [21]. We believe that companies should effectively use social media interactions to build long-lasting empowered relationships towards broadening the horizon of the brand's visibility.

#### *G. Value in Social Media and User Interaction on OBV (2C)*

Cormode, and Krishnamurthy (2008), in the research study on determinants of social media attractiveness, pointed out the gap between the past research works and their current research on identifying certain key determinants to measure attractiveness. The researchers in the study believed that key determinants should consider user interactions to bring out the value of social media. The study found that though many researchers had worked on Web 2.0 and social media in particular, aspects like user or social interaction were not adequately researched [22]. It was found that change on the internet user's self image through social media participation was not sufficiently taken for evaluation. Constantinides and Fountain, (2008) pointed out the integration of user-generated values that contributes to the incremental benefit arrived should be fully comprehended. In total the study stated that there is need to develop a conceptual approach for website attractiveness given the social media context [23]. Sigala, (2009) found that the impact of Web 2.0 on e-service quality should be recognized and measured [24]. Using social media analytics today organizations can continuously and systematically compile individual customer interactions which can be an added value to the company towards brand promotion initiatives. The study derived the practical implications for two different stakeholder groups in business. From a companies' perspective individual perception is of significant influence on the attractiveness of social media. Wirtz et al (2013) found that Interaction orientation, social networking and user-added value were found as contributing factors to the social media platform attractiveness. The expectation of the users should be critically considered while measuring the value of social media in brand promotion [25] On the other hand, for marketers while integrating social media platforms into an e-commerce online portal, the focus should be on enabling possibilities for user to interact in the context of creating value to the brand online.

The Havas Digital Insight report on finding social media success pointed out certain critical consideration on user interaction and value of social media features to brand visibility. To expand the visibility of the brand, an important driver is to gain as many fans or followers. Gaining fans and followers is driven by the media's ability to engage, interact and react to their experiences with the brand. So companies should integrate their online brand development strategies to the social nature of the web [26]. We believe that the success of a brand is based on the ability to seek the value of user interactions on real-time.

#### *H. Social Media structure and User Interaction on OBV (2D)*

We believe that in order to foster free flowing interaction the advantages of social structure should be fully capitalized. Bernstein et al (2011) found that a social media structure ensures anonymity for user to involve in active and unconditional interactions [27]. In a research paper on the social transparency in networked information exchange identified that user interactions are dependent on the concept of social transparency. Based on Connolly et al (1990) research on the effects of anonymity and evaluative tone on idea generation in computer-mediated groups it can be observed that the structure of social media brings in the 'identity transparency', the lowest level of which is known as anonymity [28]. Sassenberg and Postmes, (2002) pointed out that on one hand anonymity can bring in the challenges of untrustworthy or suspicious information which renders difficulty in interpreting the credibility of interaction between the source and targets [29]. On the other hand anonymity can function well within communities or user groups where the all the users are anonymous. Based on the research works of Kiesler and Sproull (1992), McKenna and Bargh, (1998) we can find that the norms of interaction develop to enable users to pay attention to the social context for interpretation [30] [31]. Their study state that norms of interaction can support anonymity which in turn can reduce information sharing risks like embarrassment, loss of reputation etc. Anonymity can also support transmission of controversial, sensitive, critical and novel interactions. We believe that organization should take note of the pros and cons of the free-rein structure of social media to capture interactions of users' experience of the brand and be alert in responding to the reactions of the users' dissatisfaction and converting them into satisfied interactions [32]. Brand visibility only can be bettered with such practices of being agile and assertive to the interactions of the users.

The above explanations lead to the definition of the synergies of Social Media (SM) and User Engagement (UE) as 'Participation Reinforcing Interaction' (SMUE2) which will be the second measure of Online Brand Visibility (OBV). The parameters that summarize SMUE2 are Content-driven diversified interaction (CI2),

Building Authentic Relationships (RI<sub>2</sub>), Integration of User-generated values (VI<sub>2</sub>), and Collaborative Technologies ((SI<sub>2</sub>). The diagrammatic representation is presented in figure 3 below.

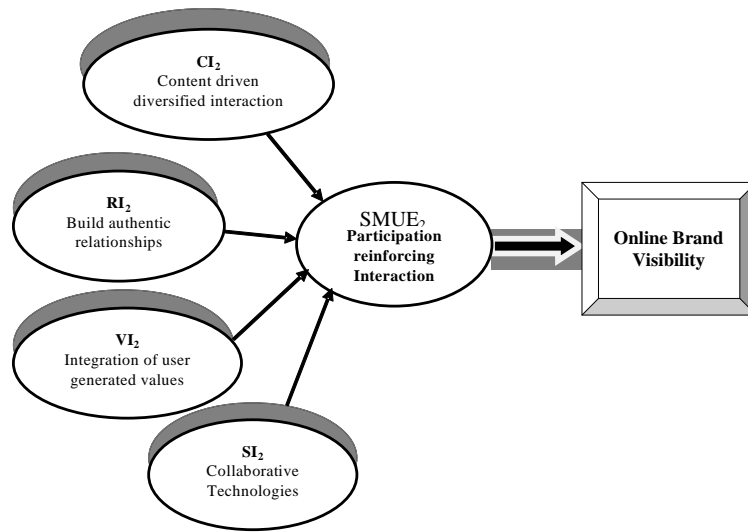


Figure 3: Synergies of User Interaction and Social Media

A set of metrics has been identified for the OBV measurement top bring out the practical implications for companies. The measurement template is given Table 3 below.

Table 3  
OBV Measurement Template for SMUE<sub>2</sub>

OBV Measures	Metrics
Consumer participation reinforcing Personal Interaction (SMUE <sub>2</sub> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time purchases online</li> <li>• Loyalty Card Registration</li> <li>• Requests for Free samples</li> <li>• Comments on Blogs</li> <li>• User generated content</li> <li>• Click-Through on banner ads</li> </ul>

*I. Social Media content and User Intimacy on OBV (3A)*

The Harvard Business Review article on Customer Intimacy written by Treacy and Wiersema states that customer intimacy combined with detailed customer knowledge and operational flexibility is the driver for companies to excel. This operational flexibility can enable companies to respond quickly to any requirement from product customization to realizing special requires of its customers [33]. We believe that in order to optimize user engagement, social engaging will be the trend by which the banks will have tailor-made interactions based on interest and intentions of users captured from their social media actions which includes *liking, sharing and commenting*. OBV is an outcome of how companies develop customer intimacy by socially engaging with the users and providing quality and customized content.

*J. Relationship in Social Media and User Intimacy on OBV (3B)*

Baird, Paransis (2011) in their IBM research on consumers’ frequency and drivers to social media sites surveyed over 1000 consumers and 350 executives worldwide. It was found that businesses interested in closer customer connections through social media conversations, should be beware that customers are influenced by the tangible values than just being connected to their brand. Companies should understand the pulse of the customer in how the they are interacting about the brand in social media, customers’ expectations that can bring them closer to the brand. We believe that this finding can be an eye-opener for traditional CRM approaches. Because unlike traditional approaches which are typically targeted towards operational responses to manage the customer, social media enabled approach empowers customers to control their relationship towards the brand. Now customers are driving the conversation based on their experience and the social media community reacts to the experience which in turn can decide on the intimacy towards the brand. Hence relationship strategies of companies seamless integrate social media practices to track, capture, retrieve, analyze and interpret customer experiences through social media tools. In fact the study suggested that companies should ask why a customer would choose to interact with the company through a social platform. Social media is all about dialogue and participation, so creating innovative ways to capture customer insights through polls, idea jams etc can bring trigger customer intimacy which in turn will help build advocacy and brand affinity [34]. Hence we believe that



synergizing the features of social media to identify customer points of intimacy can draw more customer ambassadors to your website which in turn can improve its online visibility.

Howell (2012) in his research article in the Social Media Marketing magazine advised that it is very critical to be authentic in all communication channels during the customer engagement process. Moreover given the level of percolation of social media it is quite easy for customers to sense insincere behaviour and virally spread it across the social platform in no time [35]. Honesty in communication about the brand will attract customers from and to the company's website through social media.

Based on a study on Social Media's impact on business and decision making by the Society for New Communications Research found that there is a greater attention today to propagate social media as new form building customer-centric relationships. The study objective was to identify how extensively the role of social media platforms can influence decision making. The study found that companies which attempt to build their brand visibility through social media can deepen customer intimacy. Social media can develop customer peer groups that can share ideas and virtually collaborate to discuss the value of a brand [36]. Hence organizations intending to capitalize on the advantages of such groups should convey information about their brand genuinely, transparently and honestly.

#### *K. Value in Social Media and User Intimacy on OBV (3C)*

In the research study by Deloitte on redefining customer engagement through brand advocates in social media identified four critical activities that can synergize social media value with customer intimacy. These four critical activities are experimenting social media as an dynamic and evolving medium of engagement, staying tuned to the evolving conversations about the brand on both company and non-company supported social media avenues, encourage offline advocacy with online social media and maintain and improve the company base of brand advocates by tracking and motivating loyal conversations online from social media. The study prescribed that the value of social media is to develop brand advocates which is a sum total of 'having a favourite brand' plus 'spend on favorite brand is more than half of their total category spend' plus 'spend more on favorite brand than category average' and 'involved in multiple brand engagement activities'. The study found that the brand advocates are worth twice than the average consumer surveyed based on the value of recommendations to others and their closeness to the knowledge about the brand. This can enable existing customers and prospective customers to look up to the company's website more extensively thereby increasing the online visibility of the brand [37]. We understand that brand advocates use social media because it provides them the authority and proximity to communicate about the brand within the community. This is what we call the value of social media because it provides the platform for companies and their brands to not only remain updated with their customers but also help ease and grow recommendation from the perspective of one-to-many personal conversation.

#### *L. Structure in Social Media and User Intimacy on OBV (3D)*

One of the characteristics of Social Media is about the structure itself. It is very important to identify and understand certain aspects of synergy on the structure with user intimacy. The backbone of customer intimacy to a brand is based on the depth of knowledge and insights the customer has about the brand. The key is operational flexibility [38]. In today's marketing a platform that offers maximum flexibility to the users to respond and share their experiences with a brand, is what most organizations sought after. There are five attributes based on the Balance Score Card that can be developed to measure customer intimacy. They are customer knowledge, solution offered, penetration, culture of driving client success and long-run relationship [39]. The customization enabled by social media platform should be optimally used by organization to bring out the value of customer intimacy to brand. We believe that given the freedom of customized content creation in the social media, organizations today can track more effectively customer knowledge enhance their brand visibility online.

The definition of the synergies of Social Media (SM) and User Engagement (UE) based on the explanation in the previous paragraph is given as 'Traffic Generation' (SMUE<sub>3</sub>) which will be the third measure of Online Brand Visibility (OBV). The parameters that summarize SMUE<sub>3</sub> are Leveraging Customer Interests (CI<sub>3</sub>), Collaborative Efforts (RI<sub>3</sub>), Brand Advocacy (VI<sub>3</sub>), and Operational Flexibility (SI<sub>3</sub>). The figure 4 below presents the diagrammatic representation.

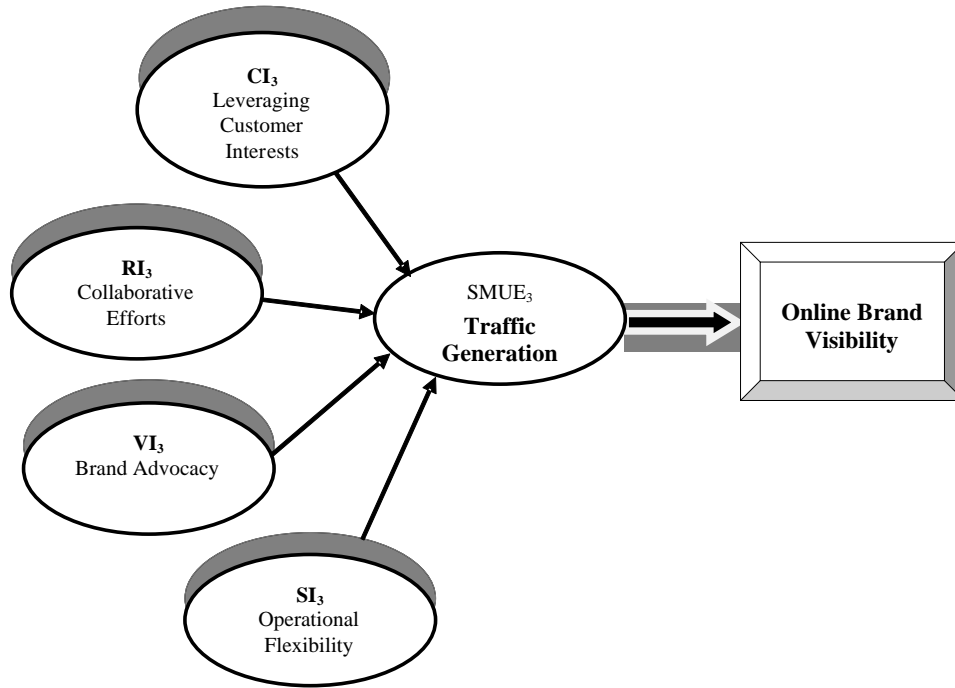


Figure 4: Synergies of User Intimacy and Social Media

Certain metrics are given in the below template for measure the OBV measure defined above. Companies can refer to these metrics to get a practical and empirical relevance of the measures. The measure and the relevant metrics template is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4  
OBV Measurement Template for SMUE<sub>3</sub>

OBV Measures	Metrics
Traffic Generation (SMUE <sub>3</sub> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of likes</li> <li>• Satisfaction rates</li> <li>• Sentiment in Customer Service Calls</li> <li>• Brand Affinity</li> <li>• Sentiment in Online forums and Review Sites</li> </ul>

*M. Social Media content and User Influence on OBV (4A)*

Daniel et al (2011) studied the influence and passivity in social media and identified that the IP influence of the users is an accurate predictor of the upper bound on the total number of click they can get on the URLs they post. Their study found that vast efforts were devoted by individuals and companies to get noticed to their ideas, policies, and products through communication of the relevant content through social media networks. However they found that the challenge is that of the vast nature and social media networks which renders less attention to the masses. The study also found that there is a natural shift on the part of the content contributors to target those individuals who were perceived as influencers because of their large numbers of followers [40]

Another study on querying more than 12,000 consumer in the US and UK had the objective of finding out the consumer engagement in different industries like retail, travel, entertainment and financial through the social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+. One of the most common finding was 81% of the US respondents' purchase decisions were influenced directly by their friends' posts. This finding only supports an earlier research done by the Chief Marketing Officer Council (CMO) and a social media research firm Lithium, which found that 80% of the respondents were influenced to try new things based on friends' posts. There were critics who argued that users are not that interested in the content but were eager to look out for a promotion, rebate, giveaway etc., when it comes to influence and social media content. Because the study also found that the brands that were influenced by friends' posts were offering a lot of freebies, coupons and various other promotional offers. Interestingly the study had 75% of all the participated respondents were women [41]

The latest findings from the Technorati's 2013 Digital Influence Report show that "consumers are turning to blogs when looking to make a purchase". Some of their major findings are blogs influence consumers' purchasing decisions, bloggers tend to be very honest and sincere in their reviews of products and services, consumers say smaller communities are more influential, brands rely more on Facebook to influence consumers,

top Social Media influencers blog for themselves, brands and influencers measure success differently, brands and influencers have a different understanding of influence [42]

Based on the above we believe that social media content can trigger user influence. The reach of content and the influence through social media are one of the key indicators of brand visibility for organizations today.

#### *N. Social Media Relationships and User Influence on OBV (4B)*

Today the way users and brand interact has been transformed by Social Media. However many companies are still not very sure as to how relationship building initiatives in social media can create influencers of the brand and thereby increase sales. Ellie Brown (2010) in the study at the University of Washington found that three well-known brands namely Ford, Chevrolet and Starbucks have used social media strategies to better relate themselves to their customers and enabling the customer influence the company's promotional strategies [16]. These companies were able to build brand loyalty through social networks by encouraging appropriate interactions and reciprocal relationships. It is crucial to understand certain key characteristics of social media relationships that can impact promotion of a brand namely opinion leadership and interpersonal influence, diffusion of ideas and innovation within social networks [43], [44]. User influence is an outcome of successful word-of-mouth marketing which is dependent on knowledge, trust within the social group. Hence we believe that visibility of a brand online depends a lot on how the company adopts social media marketing strategies to build relationship, sale pitching and promotions. Simultaneously, companies need to understand the role and influence of users who can turn into opinion leaders, influencers and brand advocate within the social networks. It is through properly leveraging relationships and using user influence online brand visibility is spread through commenting, content, sharing, re-tweeting.

A research study by Accenture in 2011 revealed that social reach and influence are amongst the key indicators to predict the impact of social media investments to enhance revenue, profitability and sustained customer loyalty. Based on the research findings, Accenture designed a process for analyzing social media conversations, identify user influence and understand sentiments and trends. We believe that such initiatives can effectively measure the visibility of the brand online by identifying and fixing the aforesaid parameters on the role of relationship building and user influence in social media [45].

#### *O. Social Media Value and User Influence on OBV (4C)*

Harnessing the value of social media, companies can adopt a comparatively cost competitive yet very effective advertising strategy because social media provides remarkable targeting opportunities and reach through larger capacity and increased exposure times [46]. Jessica Lee Pugh (2010) in the research study on the role of Facebook to influence associate and construct a representative and ideal identity revealed that users tend to have identities which are not visible at the immediate surface of the face book home page. The real online identity construction commences only when they start to react. This reaction is a composition of invite, share and comment on products and experiences. This reaction is the value of social media because it results in the development of strong and weak network relationships of self-esteem, belongingness and support on the social media environment. In the study it was found that Facebook users are driven to ignite their curiosity and exercise the influence of their reaction on others. We believe that companies should carefully track such reactions and position brand promotion strategies accordingly so as to tap the potential of social media in fostering user influence to drive the brand visibility to greater levels [47].

In the case research paper by Christine (2012) on the social media as a tool for marketing and brand awareness the value of social media was brought out by understanding the huge potential of social media in expanding the horizon of marketing and brand promotion strategies. The study formed metrics to gauge online surveys, blogs and initiation of conversation which have a direct impact on the user influence of a brand. The study recommended that companies can co-innovate by engagement users in soliciting suggestion and ideas for better customer service [48].

#### *P. Structure in Social Media and User Influence on OBV (4D)*

The decentralized social media approach by IBM had been the driver for unprecedented collaboration and innovation. IBM employees talk more freely with intervention thereby developed a diverse and distributed culture of collaborated information sharing. With appropriate social guideline in place IBM employees are personally responsible for what they create and prohibit releasing any proprietary information to public. IBM does not believe in policing. IBM employees use tools such as LinkedIn and Twitter for external activity, but take advantage of a range of IBM tools inside the company. Their blogging platform has a registered employee base of over 100,000 actively liking, rating and commenting posts across 17,000 blogs which enables employees to exchange ideas, advance conversation and even project promotions. The internal wiki of IBM serves as the information hub drawing more than a million page views daily and over 11 million downloads in the company's user-generated media library. IBM is good examples of how a company can prospectively imitate the structure and working of social media tools. The IBM tool Dogear functions like the social bookmarking site Delicious. Blue Twit acts like Twitter and SocialBlue works like FaceBook facilitating employees to be connected with the

past and recent ones [49]. Social networking sites can encourage decentralized decision-making and collaboration to facilitate user engagement. We believe that organization today can take advantage of the structure of social media which fosters closer user association [50]. This synergy can strengthen the company's efforts to consolidate their presence online.

The Social Media (SM) and User Engagement (UE) synergies are defined as 'Social Media Influence' (SMUE3) based on the above discussions, which will be the fourth measure of Online Brand Visibility (OBV). The parameters that summarize SMUE4 are Triggering Engagement (CI4), Trust Measurement (RI4), Promotional Strategy (VI4), and Decentralized Decision-Making (SI4). The figure 5 below presents the diagrammatic representation.

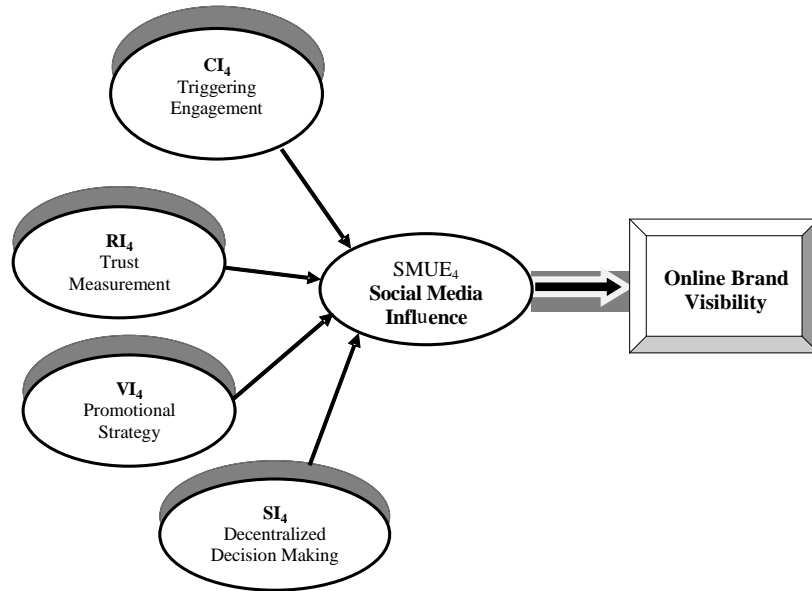


Figure 5: Synergies of User Influence and Social Media

The OBV measurement can be done through a set of metrics template which are listed in the Table 5 below which can be a source of practical reference to the companies.

Table 5:  
OBV Measurement Template for SMUE<sub>4</sub>

OBV Measures	Metrics
Community Influence through Social Media (SMUE <sub>4</sub> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Friend connections in online communities</li> <li>• Fan Websites</li> <li>• Content forwarded to friends</li> <li>• Viral User generated content</li> <li>• Loyalty</li> </ul>

#### IV. Conclusion

In this study we have presented the Social Media aspects and User Engagement parameters relation to Online Brand Visibility. The synergies of Social Media and User Engagement are based on certain predetermined parameters in research literature. But explaining the synergies the paper is only an attempt to conceptually justify a simple model for further evaluation using the measurement metrics. We believe that the growing attention on Social Media and User Engagement towards enhancing Online Brand Visibility, the synergies or the interoperability explained in our paper will lay a strong foundation to build further empirical research on testing the validity of the synergies through the metrics. In other words the findings of this research can be tested empirically to illustrate the validity of conceptual research to contextual research.

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