RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Factors Driving the Consumer Purchasing Intentions in Social Commerce

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ABSTRACT The traditional concept of e-commerce has gradually shifted to social commerce due to the faster integration of social media into the traditional e-commerce environment. The understanding of the determinants and reasons accounting for the acceptance of social commerce among the people is critical to practitioners and scholars alike to properly implement social media strategies to drive up social commerce purchases. This study thus examined the intention to purchase in social commerce among Chinese citizens based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Social Exchange Theory (SET). The data (632 valid responses) generated through a research questionnaire was analyzed by the use of structural equation modeling (SEM) aided by AMOS statistical software. The results indicate that trusting beliefs such as trust in social networks, the integrity of the seller, and the benevolence of the seller were significant predictors of the intention to engage in social commerce purchase intention. However, the competency of the seller was not a significant determinant of the intention to purchase in social commerce. Other results showed that the consumer experience in social commerce was significant in predicting the trust in social networks, the integrity of the seller, the competency of the seller, and the benevolence of the seller in social commerce interaction. The validations of the significant impact of consumer experience on the four-trusting belief factors (trust in social networks, the integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller) are among the major contributions of this study to the e-commerce and social commerce literature. Practical and research implications are discussed.

INDEX TERMS E-commerce, social commerce, trusting beliefs, experience in social commerce, China, WeChat, technology acceptance model (TAM), social exchange theory (SET).

I. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of social media innovations into the electronic commerce (e-commerce) environment has propelled and transformed the development and diffusion of e-commerce activities. E-commerce is considered the use of modern information communication technologies to transform the usual traditional relationship between sellers and consumers. Formally e-commerce is defined as the portion of e-business that promotes the sale of goods, information, and services through the Internet environment [1], [2]. E-commerce is currently accepted worldwide which allows users to shop online at will, at any time, enjoy a secured payment process and quicker delivery, reduced costs, increased

efficiency, and enhanced consumer services/experience [3], [4], [5], [6]. The use of social media technologies to enhance the interaction business between sellers and consumers is termed as social commerce (SC). The term SC is believed to have appeared around 2005/6 as a value-added commerce generator and it was however first introduced/unveiled through a maiden Facebook shop that was displayed in 2009 by Flowers Dot Com [7], [8], [9].

EC development in China is backed by strong Government intervention through regulations and policies to create a good environment for EC to flourish. The developmental stages of EC in China can be characterized into six stages/phases such as germination, growth, acceleration, maturity, outbreak, and transformation [10]. The huge strategic investment in EC infrastructure has become the driving force for driving the Chinese economy and its development laid

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the strong foundation for explosive growth in e-commerce transactions, a huge trend of online shopping, online to offline (O2O) model penetrated the traditional industry quickly, agriculture e-commerce expansion and cross-border e-commerce growth [10]. Some of the policies initiated by the Chinese Government to support the continued development and expansion of EC include: lowering the access threshold to support EC infrastructure construction, funding and strengthening financial support to EC, strengthening credibility and promoting the credit system, risk prevention by building e-commerce security and perfecting the legal system by strengthening the laws [10]. These strong policies have paid off in current statistics showing that China is the largest e-commerce market in the world in 2022 accounting for more than 50% of the world's EC transactions [11]. Online retail transactions in China reached more than 710 million digital buyers and transactions reached $2.29 trillion in 2020, which is forecasted to reach $3.56 trillion by 2024 [12]. It was further estimated that China's e-commerce market was going to be larger than these countries combined; the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, and France [12]. Also in 2021, it was expected that China's e-commerce sales to increase to 52% of total retail sales and thus making China the first country in the world to have more online sales as compared to traditional retail sales [12]. The multifunctional characteristics of the Chinese social media landscape coupled with the increase in new consumer class (affluent, sophisticated, and highly connected millennials) and a good foundation of EC growth over the years provide the fundamental basis for the transformation of e-commerce to the social commerce revolution in China. Also, the transformation to social commerce is driven by improved infrastructure, rapid growth in mobile technology, and increased financing [13].

The shift enabled by social commerce promotes better alternative methods for users especially in terms of their purchasing decisions and for sellers as well as social entrepreneurs to engage consumers [14], [15], [16]. Social commerce thus empowers faster dissemination and promotion of product information and sales via social networking avenues like WeChat, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. [17], [18], [19]. Online vendors and merchants adopt a strategy to add social media handles on their business websites to better engage or interact with consumers on social commerce [17]. This greater engagement can ensure social commerce information-sharing acts that will lead to purchase outcomes [17]. A major advantage for businesses in the use of social commerce is that it can attract the attention of consumers anywhere in the world efficiently as opposed to brick-and-mortar shop outlets [20], [21]. This unparalleled consumer engagement can ensure greater information sharing, seeking quality advice from peers, and collaboration in the social commerce space [20]. Also, consumer purchasing behaviors can be organized and restructured via artificial neural network algorithms that contribute effectively to the optimization of performance system processing of data [22], [23]. Furthermore, data-driven machine learning

and neural network algorithms are fundamental to driving consumer brand perception, attitudes, feelings, satisfaction, and user trends and patterns in virtual settings [24], [25] in which the social commerce system works. Social commerce features such as interactivity, recommendation, and feedback are positively related to the generation of perceived value and in turn influence repurchase intentions in social commerce [26].

The cutting-edge internet and mobile technologies in China have transformed the attitudes and sensitivities of consumers of social commerce [27]. The social commerce phenomenon encourages consumer information rating, sharing, recommendations, reviews, and referrals among users which ultimately can drive social commerce adoption in China [28]. Social commerce in China is estimated to wealth $300 billion whilst the retail social commerce sales volumes in China are expected to grow to $ 242.41 billion (RMB 1.675 trillion) in 2020 which amounts to 11.6% of the whole e-commerce activities in China [29], [30]. In 2021, the retail sales of social commerce in China reached 351 billion U.S. dollars and it is estimated to surpass 500 billion U.S. dollars by 2024 [31]. As per the first quarter of 2022, the social commerce industry in China is expected to grow by 13.3% on annual basis to reach US$378551.9 million in 2022 and it is projected to increase to reach US$743312.8 million by 2028 [32]. Market watchers have projected that the social commerce retail industry sales volume will increase over the coming year doubling to $ 474.81 billion (RMB 3.280 trillion) by 2023 [30]. With these impressive statistics about the social commerce trend in China, experts have opinioned that social commerce is well established in China as compared to the USA [30]. The total social commerce trade volume in China in 2019 was $ 186.04 billion (RMB 1.285 trillion) as compared to the USA which was $ 19.42 billion in the same year [30]. It was further estimated that by the end of 2020 20% (357.2 billion) of the Chinese population would have engaged in social buying (s-commerce) activities [30]. Social commerce users in China grew from 780 million in 2020 to 795 million in 2021.

The popular social commerce system in China is WeChat (also known as Weixin) which was established in 2011 as social media and messaging mobile app. The WeChat system has an embedded payment system (WeChat Pay) which allows users to pay for bills and other services. What makes WeChat payment different from others (like Alipay) is that WeChat pay has in-app features of the social media app WeChat as compared to Alipay which is a dedicated smart and mobile payment system [33]. This implies that WeChat users do not have to exit the app when switching from chatting with friends and posting on their timelines, to shopping online or making appointments. This in short means that everything can be completed within the WeChat system. Also, WeChat pay has a higher penetration rate of 84.3% as compared to its competitor Alipay 62.6% [33]. Furthermore, WeChat is considered to be very popular among first-time smartphone owners in China, especially in rural

areas. By end of November 2020, WeChat, the most widely used mobile app in China recorded monthly active users of 983 million due to its multi-purpose nature which goes beyond social networking and messaging, surpassing other social media apps in China [34]. In terms of users, about 25% of WeChat users are between the ages of 25 and 30 years while 26% of mobile users in China spent about 30 minutes per day interacting on Wechat [35]. Empirical research has shown that WeChat is an important social media system in China with users' motivation to use is determined by entertainment, sociality, information, and trust [36]. Also, it has been established that social commerce indicators such as social support, emotional support, and information support can promote the social interaction of consumers on WeChat [37].

This study aims to understand the decision of WeChat users to engage in social commerce purchases. WeChat the most used social media app among Chinese citizens has become the epitome of Chinese society and since its inception as a social communication system, it has been developed to extend to commercial activities and interactions. Thus, WeChat as a social platform that has been innovatively transformed into a commercial business system is worthy of investigation and importantly as a research target since it has fundamentally changed the Chinese people's daily living conditions and their way of life (i.e. integrating their social media lives with commercial activities/interactions). This ultimately leads them to participate in the social commerce interactions generated on social media systems like WeChat. Understanding the issues influencing users to purchase through social commerce is important to drive the diffusion of social commerce as compared to traditional e-commerce. Several studies have provided insight into the motivation for the usage of WeChat and the reasons driving Chinese users to purchase on social commerce (WeChat) [38], [39], [40]. But these studies have paid less attention to issues of trusting beliefs which is the identified gap that this research seeks to fill. The issue of trust is critical and key when it comes to commercial activities [41], particularly in the virtual environment in which social commerce purchase decisions are made. Trust issues are quite important in the relationship of the seller-buyer interaction when commerce engagement is based on financial outcomes [42], [43], [44]. Trusting belief dimensions empower buyers in social commerce to reduce the level of uncertainty and risk-averse social transactions with merchants [42], [45], [46]. We thus, integrated beliefs indicators such as trust in a social network, the integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller along with consumer experience into the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to understand how these factors can determine Chinese citizens' purchase behaviors on WeChat (social commerce). The research questions to empower the attainment of the goals of this pape are: 1) to what extent do the four (4) trusting belief factors influence the purchase decision of users on WeChat-social commerce? And 2) to what extent does the experience of the consumer in the use of social commerce influence the trusting belief factors?

This study draws on TAM and SET to explore the determinants of users' behaviors/intentions during the purchase process (exchange process) in social commerce. Based on TAM (which is designed to predict information systems adoption), the study discusses the behavioral intentions and how consumers make their purchase decision in social commerce based on trusting belief factors. By using SET, we explore how the trusting belief indicators such as trust in social network systems, the integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller as antecedents of purchasing behavioral intentions in social commerce. Experience in social commerce is examined as an antecedent of these trusting beliefs and how they can be influential during the exchanges/interaction between consumers and sellers in social commerce especially based on the SET principle of reciprocity. SET indicates that exchange behavior is done through the consumer comparison between cost and benefits [47], [48]. Trust is considered the core idea of SET which is critical in the building and sustaining of social exchange relationships [47], [49] such as purchasing on social commerce/online, etc. Given the seeming differences and similarities in the architecture of EC and SC, the role of trust in each of these dimensions may differ because the means of interactions are not the same. But due to the natural connection between EC and SC consumers can engage in trust transfer from e-commerce to social commerce [50], [51]. Trust transfer is a major mechanism of building trust and importantly, people's trust can be transferred from source to target especially when relatedness between source and target exists [52], [53]. The natures of relatedness are: similarity, proximity, and common fate, and thus given the relatedness between EC and SC, it covers all three dimensions of relatedness [50]. In other words, since the purpose of both EC and SC is to promote the purchase of goods and services, they are thus similar, proximate, and have a common fate [50]. In comparison with EC, SC as a new business model is considered to be mixed with higher levels of uncertainty and risk for consumers [50] and this potentially influences the level of consumer trust in SC. These are the motivations for the use of TAM and SET in this study. Furthermore, SET and TAM are relevant in SC in the sense that SET seeks to describe the relationships as result-oriented social behavior and people decide to enter into and maintain relationships to minimize cost while maximizing the benefits of such relationships whilst on the other hand, TAM is a framework to understand technology-related adoption behaviors. TAM aids in the explanation of the mobile technological (including social media technology) underpinnings of SC systems that drives consumer adoption behaviors while the SET examines the relationships that are created as a result of consumer interaction in social commerce and how these relationships are sustained over time. These unique roles of SET and TAM in SC may apply to EC but SET in EC may be less likely since there is the absence of adequate social interaction

generated via social media where pure EC systems do not have. This study brings a new perspective to the social commerce adoption literature since its unique contributions set apart other research that has also examined the trusting belief factors. For instance, while research has indicated that benevolence, competence, and integrity influence perceived trust [54], [55], and experience drive purchase intentions [56], these studies have however failed to examine a) how these trusting belief factors can drive the consumer purchase decision in social commerce and b) how consumer experience can influence the consumer perspectives towards these trusting beliefs (trust in social network systems, the integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller). These are thus the originality and novelty of this study which will empower businesses to appreciate the social commerce environment to improve their strategies on social commerce systems to drive their business bottom line. Social networking systems thus can be utilized to promote active seller participation in the social commerce platform [57].

The remainder of the paper is as follows: The theoretical background, hypothesis development, research model, research methodology, results and data analysis, discussion with implications (managerial and theory), and the conclusion with limitations of the study.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES
A. COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR
The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic which was christened the COVID-19 pandemic was first identified from an outbreak in the city of Wuhan, China in December 2019. Due to the devastating nature of this deadly virus, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 pandemic a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020. Since then COVID-19 has continued to spread worldwide influencing (affecting) every country and territory on this planet [58], [59]. The severity of COVID-19 forced governments around the world to implement strict measures such as social distancing and voluntary self-isolation which led to the full or partial looked down (restricted movement of persons, goods, and services) of cities and countries [60], [61]. These restrictive measures (lockdown) resulted in massive disruptions in both global and domestic supply chain systems [62], [63]. One of the industries that were hugely affected as a result of COVID-19 is the e-commerce (cross-border e-commerce, social commerce) environment since the restricted movement amidst social distancing measures has contributed significantly to the current changes in consumer behavior and attitudes [64], [65]. Many consumers had to move their consumption (selling or purchasing of products and services) online to accommodate their daily supplies [66]. Even companies that have undertaken some form of business digitalization or e-commerce were not spared from the losses occasioned by the COVID-19 Crisis regardless of their organizational size [67].

The drastic change in consumer behavior in the era of COVID-19 caused scholars to study the dynamism of consumers in the online environment (e-commerce/social commerce). The comprehension of the factors driving consumer purchasing patterns in the periods and post-COVID-19 is important for individual and business success [64]. Diverse studies have since emerged to provide useful characteristics of consumer behavior changes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, drivers of consumer behavior during COVID-19 in Malaysia showed that perceived severity and self-isolation have a direct impact on shopping consumer behavior [68]. Also, China, a study that examined how the COVID-19 lockdown affected purchasing and consumption behavior from a sustainability angle, validated that consumers' knowledge (subjective and objective) levels in connection with COVID-19 influenced the consumers' sustainability shifts during the lockdown [69]. Additionally, factors such as food security, and financial and health risk perceptions are considered key factors to understand sustainable purchasing and consumption behaviors of consumers during the pandemic [69]. A study on impulse purchase behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic showed the consumer fear of full lockdown, peer buying, scarcity of essential products, limited supply of essential goods, and panic buying have a strong and positive impact on impulse buying patterns [70]. In a similar study in Indonesia on impulsive buying, it was demonstrated that scarcity positively influenced the increase in impulse buying and social media was found to moderate the relationship between scarcity messages and impulsive buying [71]. Furthermore, in understanding the social commerce purchase decision, it was shown that social support was not a significant driver of social commerce purchase during the pandemic but rather situation factors (convenience, positive mood and negative mood) do [72].

B. TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL
Technology adoption theories are fundamental to information system research. These adoption theories provide the theoretical foundation for explaining comprehensively the adoption behavior regarding a particular technological system. Examples of such technological systems are e-commerce and social commerce. To provide a succinct basis for the adoption of new information systems, lots of technology adoption theories have been proposed. These include the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) [73], [74], the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) [75], the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [76], Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) [77] and the Theory of Task-technology Fit (TTF) [78].

Amongst the technology adoption theories listed above, the TAM is considered the most popular among researchers. This can be attributed to the comparatively simple and cost-effective measures of determining the success of a technological system [79], [80]. The basic assumption of TAM is that the adoption of any new technological system is dependent on two very important indicators (beliefs) such as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use [73]. The perceived usefulness belief is the view held by the users that the use of technology will contribute to improving their

intended objectives [73]. Perceived ease of use is the belief held by users that the use of a new information system will be difficult-free [73]. These factors are considered in the TAM model as the predictor of attitude towards usage and actual adoption of technology. TAM is still relevant today because cultural differences and preferences abound in different countries and thus have the tendency to affect the diffusion and adoption of any new information system.

TAM was utilized in this study because of its parsimony nature making it one of the most used models in IS research [81]. It has been extended to various fields of study such as e-commerce [82], e-government [83], m-health [84] adoption studies, etc. It has also been utilized in conjunction with other theories which helps in demonstrating its robustness and predictability powers. For instance [85] combined TAM with the theory of planned behavior, [86] with the task technology fit model, and [87] with the diffusion of innovation. This formed the motivation for combining TAM with Social Exchange Theory (SET) in this current study.

C. SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY (SET)

The concept of interaction/exchange of views in human social behavior was made known in the fields of psychology [88], [89], sociology [90], and management [91]. The social exchange theory (SET) is considered as the most influential concept in explaining human behavior and it is described as the degree of social exchange which includes intangible/tangible and material/nonmaterial goods that are exchanged between people [91], [92], [93]. The nature of social exchange has to do with interactions that are dependent on eliciting reward responses from others and thus social costs and expected rewards are fundamental to human decisions and character [88], [94]. Consequently, it can be said that SET emphasizes the interdependent status that is generated in a relationship among people [95]. The fundamental supposition of SET is that people do enter and maintain interaction/relationships with anticipation to get a higher positive outcome/value [91]. These may include a) exchanges that may lead to economic and social outcomes, b) outcomes are compared to other alternatives to predict the exchange interaction/relationship c) increased trust and commitment are dependent on positive consequences, and d) based on the good exchanges/interactions that happen (over time) gives relational exchange norms that govern the relationship [94]. The nature of the exchange results/consequences is key to fully appreciating how SET works for instance economic rewards like money (discounts), social rewards (emotional satisfaction, sharing concepts) are all key and relevant [94].

SET has three principles such as rationality, reciprocity, and specificity standards to elucidate the nature of the relationship between people [95], [96]. SET considers relationships to develop over a period which ultimately leads to trusting, loyal and mutual benefits and commitment by engaging and conforming to "rules and norms" of the interaction/exchange [91]. The rules and norms of exchange then become a normative definition of the situation that binds the parties during the exchange interaction [91]. In short, they become "the guidelines" for the exchange process/relationship [91]. Additionally, the common characteristics of the social exchange process are a) an actor's first treatment of another person, b) a person's reciprocal responses (attitudinal and behaviors) to the action, and c) the formation of a relationship [97]. The reaction to a positive initial action/behavior will consequentially lead to positive reciprocating responses/behavior or limited negative reciprocating responses [97]. Based on successful reciprocal exchanges, an economic exchange may be transformed into a high-quality social exchange relationship leading to higher levels of trust and commitment [97]. In the absence of good positive reciprocal exchanges (less mutually beneficial interchanges), a positive social exchange relationship (high-quality relationship) cannot exist and thus leads to low levels of commitment and trust [97]. Sometimes the uncertainty of the online environment still makes people unwilling to engage in online exchange relationships [98].

The SET is applicable to explain the cognitive process that motivates consumers to engage in social commerce purchase interactions/exchanges. Since it has to do with the exchange between consumers and sellers/merchants [99]. Consumers will engage in a relationship with sellers on social commerce systems if sellers can adequately demonstrate the SET principle of reciprocity by providing services that correspond to the consumer purchase decisions. Since one will be willing to engage in social commerce purchase behavior only if the other party (seller) reciprocates by the provision of products and services that meets the nature of the established relationship. Also, SET sees the exchange as behaviors that can lead to outcomes that are tangible and intangible, and the same concept can be applied in the context of the social commerce environment and e-loyalty [100]. As individuals anticipate reciprocal benefits like personal affection, trust, gratitude, and economic outcomes during the exchange process [47].

D. HYPOTHESES
1) TRUST IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

Trust is defined as the preparedness of someone to be vulnerable to others' actions [101], [102], [103]. The tendency for a consumer to become valuable to social commerce sites is based on the readiness of the consumer's aspirations that the online vendor will engage in a course of action that is clear, ambiguous, reliable, and trustworthy (honesty) and in the best interest of the consumer regardless of the potency of the consumer to monitor and control online shopping process [104]. Trust is considered a fundamental and important element influencing the success of e-commerce and social commerce alike [105], [106]. The issue of interpersonal trust is relevant, particularly in the virtual community where the decision to provide and receive information is dependent on this element of trust [107], [108]. The development of trust in social network systems empowers consumers to deter-

mine the nature of the trustworthiness of social network site contents (news, pictures, products, etc.) and the actions of sellers online [109]. Higher levels of trust will cause the consumer to depend on the user-generated content and thus lead to a decrease in any form of uncertainty/risk concerning the interaction outcomes and longer interaction time [108], [110], [111]. If a consumer trusts a social network site/environment, the consumer is more prone to make purchase decisions from social commerce [109], [112]. In the same vein, if individual consumers or users can not trust the social network site then they will be unable to purchase from social network sites [112]. In situations where consumers may lack trust in social network sites but trust the seller (virtual), the possibility of them purchasing from this seller (online) through a network system will be unlikely and if they do, they may choose other mediums/systems to interact with the seller [109]. The assessment of the consumer in terms of the trustworthiness of social network sites is fundamental in driving their decision to transact a business with an online seller on social commerce sites [109]. Trust has been demonstrated to have a direct relationship with information seeking and which in turn drives purchase decisions [109], [113]. Past studies have empirically validated the significant impact of trust on the adoption and intention to purchase in social commerce [112], [114], [115], [116], [117]. Accordingly, H1 was proposed.

H1: Trust has a significant impact on the intention to purchase in social commerce.

2) THE INTEGRITY OF THE SELLER
Integrity is considered the consumer perception or belief that a business vendor or entity will make good promises on the quality and superiority of the product and services offered in a business transaction [118]. When applied to the context of social network sites, it means the individual consumer's expectation or belief that the seller on social network sites will go by the promises made on social network sites concerning the nature and quality of products and services provided [114]. Integrity is considered as the ability of the seller to abide by some acceptable standards and disciplines laid down by the buyer [109]. The higher level of integrity displayed by sellers/vendors in social commerce interaction is fundamental in influencing the consumer's perception of the reputation of the seller and thus his/her intention to purchase from social network sites. Any acts of dishonesty on the other hand will negatively affect the consumer purchase decision in social commerce. Studies have shown that the integrity of the seller is instrumental in determining the purchase intentions in social commerce [41], [114]. Consequently, H2 was proposed.

H2: Integrity has a significant impact on the intention to purchase in social commerce

3) COMPETENCY OF THE SELLER
The competency of the seller/vendor is the consumer perception of the experience, knowledge, and expertise that the seller possesses and it is instrumental in determining the higher trust of consumers toward the seller [103], [119], [120]. It is the anticipation of the consumer whether the seller can properly and adequately provide the expected outcomes or services [121]. The seller also can demonstrate knowledge of product characteristics, capability, and skills [109]. Expert advice from the seller regarding the products and services that they provide via social commerce can induce the users to purchase items advertised through social media networks. The direct significant impact of the competency of the seller on the intention to purchase has been established by previous studies [41], [114]. Based on this, H3 was put forward.

H3: Competency has a significant impact on the intention to purchase in social commerce

4) BENEVOLENCE OF THE SELLER
Benevolence is the nature of care and affection that sellers demonstrate towards consumers that are engaged in social commerce interaction. Within the context of social commerce, it is the understanding of the user that the seller is concerned about his or her welfare [120] and thus will engage in activities that harm the interest of the consumer. Benevolence is the tendency of the sellers to provide aid and support for the buyer for the successful completion of trade transactions [109]. Prior studies have illustrated that the benevolence of the seller is directly associated with the user's intention to purchase through social commerce [114]. Accordingly, H4 was proposed.

H4: Benevolence has a significant impact on the intention to purchase in social commerce

5) EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL COMMERCE
Consumer experience is a psychological construct and it is seen as a firm ground for consumer satisfaction and the decision to engage in the adoption of any technology [122], [123]. The individual experience is considered a direct and indirect cognitive and effective exposure of the consumer to social commerce in terms of purchasing behavior [124]. In the context of social commerce past or prior experience means consumers consider social networking sites as suitable and easiest modes to properly examine product reviews and thus facilitated purchase decisions [122], [125]. The consumer experience is seen as an important characteristic that predicts individual attitudes and behavior within the virtual space [126], [127]. The user experience is grounded like the interactions with social commerce and may influence their purchasing decisions positively if the accumulated experience is good [128], [129]. Based on the higher levels of experience gathered while using the technology (social commerce sites/networking sites), fewer challenges will be encountered when buying goods and services online [122], [130]. It has been illustrated that consumers may prevent purchasing products online but result to physical stores and malls due to the absence of adequate knowledge and skills to interact with online shops and vendors [122]. A good consumer experience provides a good sense of security and

relaxation which leads to reduced levels of uncertainty and risk in purchasing decisions [122], [130]. The experience generated by the consumer's online interaction ensures the consumer's active participation and perceived control over the nature of s-commerce truncations [130]. Consumer experience may be influenced by several factors such as customer support, perceived value, assurance, speed and perceived company or firm innovativeness etc [131]. Many prior studies for example have shown a direct relationship between consumer experience and purchase intentions [56], [114], [132], [133]. It has also been validated that customer experience is strongly linked to consumer loyalty intentions [131]. In this current, we proposed that the consumer experience will have a positive impact on the consumer's trust in the social network sites, the integrity of the seller, the competency of the seller, the benevolence of the seller, and the intention to purchase. The experience that the consumer gathers over the years due to his interaction with sellers on social commerce sites empowers the consumer to be able to better appropriate and appraise the competency, integrity, and benevolence of the sellers on social network sites. Based on the above arguments, H5 to H9 were consequently proposed.

H5: Experience in social commerce has a significant impact on trust in the social network.

H6: Experience in social commerce has a significant impact on the integrity of the seller.

H7: Experience in social commerce has a significant impact on the competency of the seller.

H8: Experience in social commerce has a significant impact on the benevolence of the seller

H9: Experience in social commerce has a significant impact on the intention to purchase in social commerce.

III. RESEARCH MODEL

The research model is depicted in Fig. 1. The research model was based on the research hypotheses developed in the previous section.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The social media platform used for this study is called WeChat. WeChat is a vibrant and widely used social media network in China. Vendors or individual businesses take advantage of the popularity of WeChat among Chinese citizens to promote their goods and services on their WeChat moments (timelines) and thus people who are part of the networked cycle of friends can preview, review and recommend these products and services. As of the first quarter of 2020, the number of active users (MAU) of WeChat reached over a billion (1.17 billion) users. The latest data showed that as of January 2022, WeChat (Tencent's instant messenger service) has around 951 billion monthly active users [134]. The questionnaire instrument was used as a tool to collect the required data for the analysis. The survey (questionnaire) approach is considered a systematic process of data collection concerning a sample taken to form a particular bigger population [135], [136]. The mode of administration of
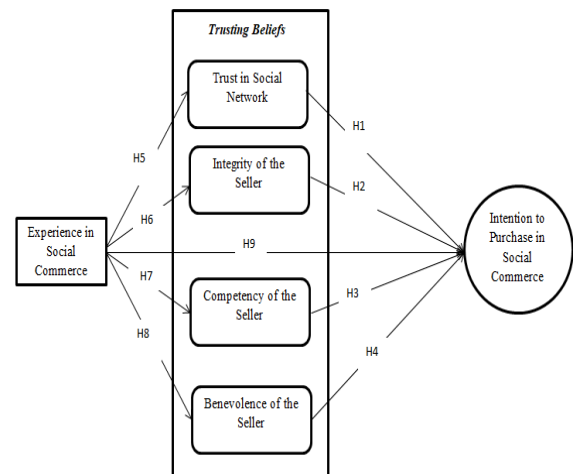

FIGURE 1. Research model.

a survey either face-to-face, telephone interviews, or self-administered questionnaires (which can be mailed or put online) is dependent on the kind of sample and the availability of funds (budget) [135], [137]. Questionnaire instruments are instrumental in collecting valid, reliable, unbiased, and discriminatory data from a sample that is representative [138], [139], [140]. The use of questionnaires is considered to be most applied in research settings since they provide a less expensive system of data collection as compared to other methods [141], [142].

The instrument developed for this study contained constructs that were adopted from previous studies as follows: experience in social commerce [143] and purchase intentions [144], [145], [146], trust in a social network [110], [112], [147], and integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller [54], [114], [148]. A sample of the instrument used is attached in Appendix 1. The questionnaire items were measured on a five (5) points Likert scale which ranges from 'Strongly Disagree (SD)' to 'Strongly Agree (SA)'. The instrument was first designed in English and was later translated into the Chinese language for the intended respondents who are Chinese citizens. Two Professors and two postgraduate students who were conversant with the English language were recruited to undertake the translation work. To ensure that the translated version did not deviate from the original meaning, a back-translation was carried out to ensure the maximum accuracy in the meaning and content of the translation. Back translation is vital in determining the quality of the translated instrument in addition to the construct bias, method bias, and item bias [149], [150], [151], [152].

The designed instrument was hosted online by sharing the website link created with many of the respondents through WeChat social networking platforms. It was shared within WeChat groups and individual personal WeChat accounts of teachers and students of Jiangxi University of Science and Technology. WeChat is a Chinese social media application developed by Tencent Company and it is considered

as the most utilized mobile application system in China [153], [154]. Since it is widely used by the Chinese people, it empowers an easier, quicker, efficient, and effective data collection process and thus accounted for its usage in this study. Some of the major features of this application (WeChat) include WeChat moments (the majority of users often access it), voice and text messaging, group messaging, payments and games, etc. The administration took place for a period of three months (July to September 2020). After three months, a total of 632 valid responses were received. The received responses were then captured and used for the data analysis. The SPSS and AMOS were used as the statistical instrument to undertake the analysis through the application of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique.

Before undertaking the statistical analysis, the common method bias (CMB) was conducted. The CMB is necessary for a researcher to conduct when they use constructs (independent and dependent) obtained by the use of the same questionnaire instrument. It was determined by the use of Harman's single-factor analysis which stipulates that a single factor should not account for more than 50% of the aggregated variance [155], [156]. Our test indicated that a single factor accounted for 39.7% of the variance which is less than 50%. This establishes that CMB was not a challenge in this study for the data collected.

V. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS
A. RESPONDENTS' PROFILE
The profiles of the respondents who took part in the study are shown in Table 1. The male and female respondents were 43.8% and 56.2% respectively. The larger portions of them were between the ages of 26-30 (30.1%) and the least age groups were between the ages of 41-50 (12.7%). In terms of education, most of them were master's degree holders (54%), followed by bachelor's degrees (36%) and Ph.D. (10%) graduates.

TABLE 1. Respondents profile.

Item	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	277	43.8
	Female	355	56.2
	18-25	103	16.3
Age	26-30	190	30.1
	31-40	143	22.6
	41-50	80	12.7
	50+	116	18.3
	Bachelors	228	36.0
Education	Masters	341	54.0
	Ph.D.	63	10.0

B. MEASUREMENT MODEL
The model fit was undertaken by the use of three model fitting measures: Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and the exact model fit (bootstrapped based on statistical inference). SRMR is described as the difference between the observed correlation and the

model-implied correlation matrix where values less than 0.08 are deemed as a good fit [157], [158]. The normed fit index (NFI) is considered an incremental fit measure that computes the Chi-square value of the proposed model and compares it against a meaningful benchmark [159]. For NFI values to be acceptable for a good fit: they must have values greater than 0.9. The exact model fit tests the statistical (bootstrap-based) inference of the discrepancy between the empirical covariance matrix and the covariance matrix implied by the composite factor model [160]. The d_LS (squared Euclidean distance) and d_G (the geodesic distance) are considered the two approaches to computing the discrepancy [161]. A model is considered to fit well if the difference between the correlation matrix implied by the model being tested and the empirical correlation matrix is so small that it can mainly be attributed to sampling error thus the empirical correlation matrix should be non-significant ($p > 0.05$) [160]. It has been recommended that d_{ULS} and d_G < 95% bootstrapped quantile (HI95% of d_{ULS} and HI 95% of d_G) for good fit [162]. SRMR value of 0.040 (< 0.08) and NFI was 0.948 (> 0.90) and the d_{ULS} < bootstrapped HI 95 of d_{ULS} and d_G < bootstrapped HI 95% of d_G obtained do demonstrate that the measurement model shows a good fit. Having satisfied ourselves with the goodness of fit of the measurement model, the next step was to measure the adequacy of the measurement model of the constructs used in the study. The adequacy of the measurement model was determined by the use of quality standard indicators such as reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity. The reliability was measured through Cronbach alpha and composite reliability while the convergent validity was assessed by the use of average variance extracted. Factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) are recommended to be above 0.50 [163], [164]. Also, the values for composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha are recommended to be higher than 0.70 [165], [166].

As indicated in Table 2, the recommended threshold estimated values for reliability and convergent validity have been established and are thus indicative of the satisfaction of the measurement model of the constructs used in this study.

To further validate the adequacy of the constructs used in this study, discriminant validity was conducted. This was one by the use of the first, the Fornell-Larcker, and second, the cross-loadings standards. The standards postulate that the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) must have values that are higher than the interaction (correlation) between the paired constructs. As displayed in Table 3, the square root of AVE (diagonal) exhibits values that are higher than the matching (off-diagonal estimates) values. Also, the crossing loading standards stipulate that the loading of each construct should have values greater than cross-loadings (all). These two standards for discriminant validity to exist have been met and thus establish the discriminant validity of the measures and scales used in this study. Further validation of the discriminate validity was undertaken by using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT).

TABLE 2. Measurement model.

Constructs	Code	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Experience in Social Commerce	ESC1 ESC2 ÈSC2	.954 .927 .948	.952	.960	.889
Trust in Social Network	TSN1 TSN2 TSN3	.908 .979 .948	.964	.972	.920
Integrity of the Seller	IS1 IS2 IS3	.923 .945 .921	.934	.964	.901
Competency of the Seller	CS1 CS2 CS3	.965 .949 .973	.924	.974	.916
Benevolence of the Seller	BS1 BS2 BS3	.958 .977 .908	.912	.964	.899
Intention to Purchase in Social Commerce	ITPSC1 ITPSC2 ITPSC3	.943 .985 .941	.937	.970	.915

TABLE 3. Discriminant validity.

Item	ESC	TSN	BS	CS	IS	ITPSC
ESC	**.943**					
TSN	.686	**.859**				
BS	.559	.546	**.948**			
CS	.781	.667	.641	**.862**		
IS	.683	.769	.543	.464	**.949**	
ITPSC	.586	.681	.672	.570	.775	**.857**

Note: Bold indicates (diagonal) square root of AVE. Experience in Social Commerce (SC), Trust in Social Networks (TSN), Integrity of the Seller (IS), Competency of the Seller (CS), Benevolence of the Seller (BS), Intention to Purchase in Social Commerce (ITPSC)

The results are shown in Table 4. The HTMT principle stipulates that if the HTMT values are greater than 0.85 or 0.90 then there exists an issue of discriminate validity [167], [168]. As indicated in Table 5, all the values obtained met the HTMT standard values of less than 0.85 or 0.90 thresholds and thus it can be concluded that there is no problem of discriminate validity in the data.

C. STRUCTURAL MODEL

The results of the structural model conducted are shown in Table 5 and graphically illustrated in Fig. 2. The results have shown that trust in social networks ($\beta = 0.310$, $p < 0.05$) and integrity of the seller ($\beta = 0.161$, $p < 0.05$) have a direct significant impact on the intention to purchase on social commerce. Hence H1 and H2 were supported. Also whilst the competency of the seller was not significant

TABLE 4. Discriminant validity of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT).

Item	ESC	TSN	BS	CS	IS	ITPSC
ESC	-					
TSN	0.713	-				
BS	0.742	0.699	-			
CS	0.689	0.719	0.820	-		
IS	0.797	0.728	0.811	0.654	-	
ITPSC	0.801	0.799	0.733	0.741	0.786	-

Experience in Social Commerce (SC), Trust in Social Networks (TSN), Integrity of the Seller (IS), Competency of the Seller (CS), Benevolence of the Seller (BS), Intention to Purchase in Social Commerce (ITPSC)

TABLE 5. Structural model (hypothesis).

Hypotheses	Path			β	T-Value	Sign	Supported
H1	TSN	→	ITPSC	.310	8.076	***	Yes
H2	IS	→	ITPSC	.161	4.717	***	Yes
H3	CS	→	ITPSC	.069	2.005	.195	No
H4	BS	→	ITPSC	.330	17.356	***	Yes
H5	ESC	→	TSN	.686	147.740	***	Yes
H6	ESC	→	IS	.683	134.120	***	Yes
H7	ESC	→	CS	.481	126.770	***	Yes
H8	ESC	→	BS	.559	85.552	***	Yes
H9	ESC	→	ITPSC	.139	4.172	***	Yes

Notes: *** p < 0.05, Experience in Social Commerce (SC), Trust in Social Networks (TSN), Integrity of the Seller (IS), Competency of the Seller (CS), Benevolence of the Seller (BS), Intention to Purchase in Social Commerce (ITPSC)

in predicting the intention to purchase in social commerce ($\beta = 0.069$, $p > 0.05$), the benevolence of the seller, however, was a significant determinant of the intention to purchase in social commerce ($\beta = 0.330$, $p < 0.05$). Accordingly, H3 was not supported while H4 was supported. Furthermore, we discovered that experience in social commerce was significant in influencing individual factors such as: trusting in social network ($\beta = 0.686$, $p < 0.05$), integrity of the seller ($\beta = 0.683$, $p < 0.05$), competency of the seller ($\beta = 0.481$, $p < 0.05$), benevolence of the seller ($\beta = 0.559$, $p < 0.05$) and finally the intention to purchase in social commerce. Consequently, H5, H6. H7, H8, and H9 were all supported.

D. MEDIATING TESTS (POST HOC ANALYSIS)

A post hoc analysis using 5000 bootstrapping samples with 95% confidence intervals (CI) [169], [170] was undertaken to examine the nature of the mediation effect inherent in the model. Trust in social network (TSN), the integrity of the seller (IS), competency of the seller (CS), and benevolence of the seller (BS) are mediating variables, mediating the relationship between experience in social Commerce (ESC)
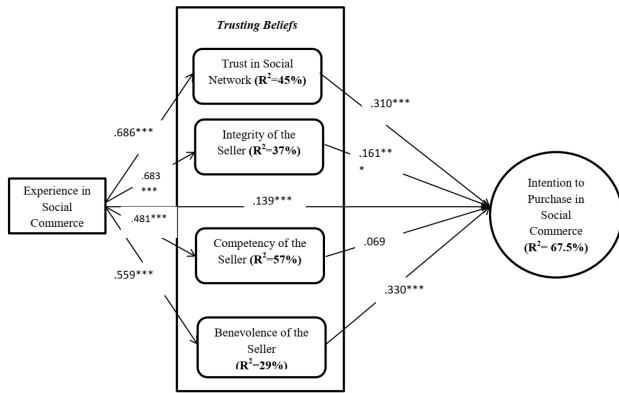
FIGURE 2. Validated structural model.

Figure elements: Experience in Social Commerce → Trusting Beliefs [Trust in Social Network (R^2=45%); Integrity of the Seller (R^2=37%); Competency of the Seller (R^2=57%); Benevolence of the Seller (R^2=29%)] → Intention to Purchase in Social Commerce (R^2=67.5%). Paths: .686***, .683***, .481***, .559***, .310***, .161***, .139***, .069, .330***

TABLE 6. Mediation test.

IV	M	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Mediation tests (P1P2) 95%-CI		Zero included	Mediation test (P3') 95%-CI		Zero included	Nature of Mediation
					Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper		
ESC	TSN	0.412**	0.715**	0.515**	0.124	0.259	No	0.056	0.189	No	Partial
	IS	0.635**		0.273**	0.077	0.194	No	0.048	0.137	No	Partial
	CS	0.845**		0.510**	0.156	0.346	No	0.156	0.291	No	Partial
	BS	0.621**		0.374*	0.103	0.298	No	0.012	0.309	No	Partial

Experience in Social Commerce (ESC), Trust in Social Networks (TSN), Integrity of the Seller (IS), Competency of the Seller (CS), and Benevolence of the Seller (BS). IV (independent variable), M (mediator), P1, P2, P3, and P3' (path coefficients), CI (Confident Interval), ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$

and the social commerce purchase intention. Three steps were employed to test the mediations effects as follows: first the influence of the independent variable (IV) on mediating variables (path-P1), Second, the effect of mediating variables on dependent variables (path-P2), and third, the path from independent variables to dependent variables (path-P3 or / P3' inclusive of both paths P1, and P2). The CI for P3' was used to determine if there is full or partial mediation. The principle is that if P1P2 is non-zero and P3' is zero, then there can be said to be a full mediating impact. On the other hand, if both P1P2 and P3' are non-zero then a situation of partial mediating effect exists [171], [172]. Based on the results shown in Table 6 (along with its total, direct and indirect effects), it can be concluded that there is a partial mediating effect of the variables considered i.e. TSN, IS, CS, and BS partially mediating the relationship between experience in social commerce and social commerce purchase intention.

VI. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the factors that influence the decision of consumers to purchase online through social media among Chinese citizens. Per the analysis of the results, the study has unraveled that factors such as trust in the social network, Integrity of the seller, and benevolence of the seller were significant in determining the intention of Chinese citizens to purchase through social commerce. The analysis revealed contrary to our expectations that the competency of the seller does not influence the decision of the consumers to purchase through social commerce. This finding on the non-significant impact of the competency of the seller on purchase intentions in social commerce is a contradiction and does not support prior studies that have demonstrated that indeed the competency of the seller is an important and significant predictor of the decision to purchase [41], [114]. Usually, the competency of the seller in respect of the knowledge of the product or services displayed on social commerce platforms should influence the decision of the consumer to purchase on social commerce. But the reasons that may account for its non-influence in driving consumer purchase decisions may be attributed to the heightened levels of rich knowledge of consumers about products and services they purchase on social commerce. Additionally, through the huge exposure to information sharing and knowledge management that enables the multiplicities of distributed sharing in social commerce environment consumers are better empowered to make purchasing decisions (competence assessments) of products and services. Social commerce technology is considered as consumer empowering technology because of its large amount of information base, greater choice, and control [173], [174]. Consumer empowerment through social commerce drives the consumer knowledge and competence to appraise competing goods and services and to meet/satisfy their needs with reduced time/effort, money, and waste [175], [176], [177]. The empowerment generated through social commerce can occur through retooling one's identity and personality (interaction/sharing with others, learning, and testing of skills) and improving self-efficacy skills which ultimately drive customers' self-determination and self-efficacy [178], [179], [180].

Also, the study demonstrated that trust in a social network is a significant predictor of the intention to purchase through social commerce. This means that the level of confidence of consumers or social media users in the social network they use is instrumental in driving them to purchase on social commerce. Higher levels of trust will lead to more interaction and the more the interaction (sharing) the more there is a higher possibility of engaging in social commerce purchases. Our results and findings on the significant impact of trust in a social network are in line with other prior studies that have reported that trust was significant in predicting both social shopping and sharing intentions among consumers [114], [181], [182], [183], [184]. That is through the thorough mutual interaction that is developed on social network

interaction, two important elements are developed such as emotional and information support for members of the social network community [181]. These two elements lead to the greater building of trust which then influences the consumer to engage in social commerce and sharing decisions. Additionally, security is fundamental in developing sustainable consumer trust in social network systems. This can be done through the provision of systems that guarantee the confidentiality of data (personal and financial) by deploying advanced encryption, secure socket layer (SSL) certificates, certificates with extended authentication validation, and Trustmark technologies. Online vendors should implement management strategies that lead to greater building and cementing of trust since it can stimulate consumer purchase decisions.

Furthermore, the study has shown that the integrity of the seller on social commerce is an important determinant of the intention to purchase on social commerce. This finding supports earlier literature that indicated that the integrity of the seller has a direct significant impact on the decisions of the consumer to trust in social commerce [41], [182], [185]. The element of integrity is instrumental to drive the consumer's decision to purchase and complete the payment process in a good and prompt manner [186]. Sellers' integrity can assure the consumers the seller/merchant delivers the goods and services promised based on the mutually agreed time after the payment process has been completed [186]. Also, the integrity of the seller is critical to driving the purchase intentions of consumers since it can help to dissuade the minds of consumers of any possibility of fraud or phantom sales by sellers without the known ability to deliver or intention to honor the terms and conditions of the purchase [54], [187]. Integrity thus becomes tangential and fundamental in driving the intent and ability of sellers to fulfill the terms and conditions of purchase interaction (contract). Thus any acts of misrepresentation by the seller in terms of quality/features of goods/services, fake/illegal/pirated goods/services, and failure to deliver/supply purchased items undermines the integrity of the seller and may discourage any possibility of future purchase decisions by buyers.

In addition, the study has shown that the benevolence of the seller is a significant determinant of the intention to purchase on social commerce. This means that how the seller on social commence sites exhibits her affection and care for the well-being of the consumer can drive such consumers to purchase on social commerce. It has been illustrated that kind of benevolence shown by the seller has a positive relationship with consumer trust in social commerce [114]. This result does not corroborate previous findings that indicated that the benevolence of the seller has no direct significant positive effect on the purchase decisions of consumers [41]. Since benevolence is the desire of the seller to demonstrate sensitivity to the expectations and interests of the buyer; the nature (high/low) of it in the transaction process can undermine or add value to the interaction leading to purchasing decisions or not. To generate the needed maximum purchase decisions in social commerce, vendors/sellers should be prepared to serve the interest of consumers always. They must not only think about their bottom lines but rather how the service they provide can better meet the demands/need requirements of the consumer.

Another dimension of this study was to examine if the consumer experience in social commerce has a direct impact on determining the trust in social commerce, integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller. The analysis reveals that the experience of the consumer was significant in influencing these four factors (mentioned above). That means that the experience that the consumer acquires through the interaction on social commerce platforms puts them in a better position to determine 1) if a particular social commerce site can be trusted or not, 2) if the integrity of the seller can be relied on, 3) if the competency of the seller can be depended on and 4) if the benevolence of the seller can be depended on in terms of the kindness observed. Previous studies have shown that consumer experience has a direct relationship with consumer purchase decisions and satisfaction [114], [188], [189]. Also, past studies have empirically validated the positive impact of personal experience on purchase intentions [56], [190]. But in this study, we have tried to experiment (new) with the direct effect of experience on the trust, integrity, competency, and benevolence of the seller within the context of social commerce. This is a new addition to the e-commerce and social commerce adoption literature.

A. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in terms of e-commerce and social commerce. First, in terms of the application of the Technology Adoption Model (TAM) in the context of e-commerce and social commerce, the major components of TAM such as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were not employed in this study. This implies that there are other factors aside from these two key determinants in TAM that influence the adoption decisions of consumers as they interact with new technologies such as social commerce. Secondly, the percentage of variance explained in purchase intentions in social commerce is 67.5%. It means that these four factors such as trust in a social network, the integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller account for 67.5% of the factors influencing the Chinese consumer's decisions to engage in social commerce. Thirdly, the consumer experience in the use of social commerce accounted for 45%, 37%, 57%, and 29% respectively of trust in a social network, integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller in social commerce. Furthermore, the integration of SET in this study along with TAM does help to advance a better appreciation of the technological and social interaction undercurrent in social commerce. The SET explains the exchange process as a function of reciprocal stimuli, with exchanges breaking down if not reciprocated (i.e. if an imbalance is allowed to permeate the interaction process) in the social commerce system. Additionally, the social interaction that underpins SET

implies that consumers should establish and maintain social relations on the expectations that such relations will be advantageous mutually and that they will allow for more reciprocal stimuli and thus creating lasting long-term social interactions on social commerce platforms. These contributions provide a baseline for future researchers to explore and improve, particularly the non-significant impact of the integrity of the seller on consumer purchase decisions in social commerce.

B. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The validated significant effect of trust in social networks on the purchase decisions of consumers in social commerce is illustrative of the important role the element of trust can have on the virtual commerce platform. This means that the major players (consumers/sellers) must engage in acts that will deepen the level of trust among users on the social commerce platform. They must ensure the full disclosure of information between the buyer and seller, protection of information and privacy, and honesty in the pricing and quality of the products and services provided on social commerce. If these are properly managed, it can influence the level of trust in users of social commerce and thus may influence their decisions to purchase on social commerce. The building of secured web clients, data transport, web servers, and web OS can help in cementing consumer trust in social network systems.

Also, this study has validated that the integrity and benevolence of the seller influence the decision of the consumer to purchase through social commerce. This implies first, that the ability of the seller to demonstrate a higher form of integrity in the products and services advertised/sold on social commerce sites will influence users to purchase. The demonstration of integrity can be in the forms of openness, fulfillment, loyalty, uprightness, significance, and expertise. Merchants/sellers should maintain higher forms of integrity by living by the policy and regulations that govern the transactions on the social commerce platform. They must adhere strongly to the moral and ethical standards that are acceptable and encourage consumers to participate in purchase decisions/behaviors.

Secondly, the benevolence that is displayed by the seller towards the consumers in the course of interacting on social commerce platforms can drive users to purchase or not. Sellers, therefore, are encouraged to show some form of deep empathy and caring towards the consumer. The seller should not just be interested in getting paid but must also be interested in how the consumer can receive the goods or services in/on time as promised. When this is done it will drive users to make more purchases frequently. Sellers should be motivated to provide services that will yield maximum satisfaction leading to mutual benefits between consumers and sellers. Also, sellers exhibit better forms of benevolence by reducing or minimizing opportunistic characters/behaviors through the dissemination of information between consumers and traders. Opportunistic behaviors that should be avoided by sellers to generate stronger purchase intentions include distortion of goods characteristics, provision of incomplete transaction information, misrepresentation of product or service quality, and inability to duly acknowledge warranties.

Furthermore, we have established that the consumer experience in the use of social commerce has a direct impact on determining trust, integrity, competency, and benevolence. This implies that the more consumers get acquainted with social commerce the more knowledgeable they are to determine if a social network/commerce site can be trusted or not. That is based on the frequency of use, they can determine if they can successfully procure a particular service or product or not. Also, through experience, they can determine if the integrity of a seller can be depended on to provide services as guaranteed. Also, with good experience, consumers can determine if a seller has the right ability and knowledge of the product or service presented. And finally, with adequate user experience, it can be unraveled whether or not a seller cares about the consumer's interest. Consumers/users of social commerce are encouraged to gain enough experience through greater engagement or interaction on social commerce spots to determine the level of trust, integrity, competency, and benevolence in social commerce.

VII. CONCLUSION

Social commerce innovations have overtaken the traditional e-commerce platform, particularly with the introduction of mobile technology. This study thus examined the factors (trust in social network, integrity of the seller, competency of the seller, benevolence of the seller, and experience in social commerce) impacting consumer purchase decisions in social commerce by combining the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Social Exchange Theory (SET). The findings based on 632 valid responses (sample) have established that trust in social network sites, competency of the seller, and benevolence of the seller were positive predictors of the intention to purchase in social commerce except for the integrity of the seller. Additionally, consumer experience in social commerce was significant in predicting the trust in a social network, the integrity of the seller, the competency of the seller, and the benevolence of the seller in social commerce. These results have demonstrated from the perspective of Chinese citizens, the elements that drive their purchase decisions in social commerce. This study has provided both theoretical considerations for researchers as well as for practitioners of e-commerce and social commerce. Particularly for practitioners, it enables them to drive consumers to their products and ultimately promote a good experience for sellers and consumers alike. Sellers should be informed that consumers are ultimately concerned about the trust, competency, and benevolence of the seller.

This study has some limitations which can be improved for further research. First, the sample obtained was from only Chinese citizens, and secondly, the sample may not be representative and thus the results cannot be generalized without caution. Thirdly, not all the factors driving the adoption of social commerce were examined in this study since it will be impossible for a single paper (research) to do

so. In light of this, future studies should seek to examine how perceived risk dimensions (performance, financial, and security/privacy) and usefulness drive the decision of users to continue to purchase through social commerce. Additionally, it is possible to explore how trusting beliefs (competency, integrity, and benevolence of sellers) can moderate the impact of these perceived risk dimensions on the adoption of social commerce.

APPENDIX A
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS
Trust in Social Networks (TSN)

TSN1: I think that my friends on social network sites will not harm me or put me in danger.

TSN2: I feel that interacting with the social network community meets my needs for interaction efficiently.

TNS3: I feel strongly that I can depend on the social network society e.g. friends and relatives.

The integrity of the Seller (IS)

IS1: I feel that sellers on social network sites will keep their promise

IS2: I have faith in sellers on social commerce sites

IS3: I think sellers on social network sites will not over-price the cost of products and services.

Competence of the Seller (CS)

CS1: I think vendors on social network sites have the required knowledge

CS2: I believe that sellers on social network sites have the expertise and experience

CS3: I strongly believe that sellers on social network sites can provide high-quality products and services

Benevolence of the Seller (BS)

BS1: I think vendors on social network sites care about me

BS2: I feel that vendors on social network sites are honest

BS3: I feel strongly that vendors are concerned about my well-being

Experience in Social Commerce (ESC)

ESC1: I have used using social network sites for many years.

ESC2: I have bought many products and services on social media sites.

ESC3: I have rich experience in purchasing through social commerce.

Intention to Purchase (ITP)

ITP1: I intend to purchase on social sites if the product is recommended by my social network friends.

ITP2: I will purchase through social commerce.

ITP3: I will continue to purchase through social network sites.

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