The Effects of Multidimensional Customer Trust on Purchase and eWOM Intentions in Social Commerce based on WeChat in China

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A B S T R A C T

The development of mobile social networking service (SNS) triggers the growth of social commerce industry. Customers rely considerably on electronic word of mouth (eWOM) to make purchasing decisions. Thus, SNS is an important commercial platform that offers attractive opportunities and challenges to firms. This study sheds light on the role of SNS as a social commerce platform by focusing on WeChat, the most popular SNS in China. This study identifies three different types of trust based on SNS that customers perceive in the context of social commerce. These types of trust are contents trust, source trust, and platform trust.

This study suggests the antecedents and consequences of each trust. Our results prove that eWOM intention relies on contents trust and source trust, whereas purchase intention depends on contents trust, source trust, and platform trust. This study also finds that contents trust is positively influenced by source trust and platform trust. Finally, the result verifies the key antecedents of each trust, namely, vividness and timeliness for contents trust, competence, benevolence, and integrity for source trust, and instrumental need and social need for platform trust. The discussion and implications on the findings are provided.

Keywords: Social Commerce, WeChat, Contents Trust, Source Trust, Platform Trust, Trust Transfer, eWOM Intention, Purchase Intention

Ⅰ. Introduction

WeChat is the most popular social networking service (SNS) based on smartphones in China. Indeed, WeChat has grown up as a typical smartphone-based mobile messenger since it launched in 2011. It was developed on the basis of the QQ instant messenger that had been operated since 1999 by Tencent, the largest online game company in China. According to a report of CNNIC (China Internet Network

Information Center), until September 2015, WeChat users are more than 900 million, the number of monthly active users is reached 650 million, and over 90% of smartphone users in China are WeChat users (CNNIC, 2014).

Due to the wide spread of smartphones, SNS has become brand-new platforms for firms to disseminate and exchange information with their targeted customers. The advertisement contents posted in SNS has become one of the important sources for consumers to obtain product information. Recent research shows that 80% of consumers trust online recommendations. As SNS boosts marketing and commerce effectiveness, it is getting more popular as a firm's major communication tools and advertising channels (Lee et al., 2011). Therefore, it is important to understand the effectiveness of SNS as a new commercial platform for marketing and commerce.

It is apparent that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) through SNS is one of the important routes for consumers to obtain product information (Chu, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014). It is reported that 80% of consumers trust online recommendations to make a purchase decision (Zhang et al., 2014). Zhang et al. (2014) found that 90% of online shoppers read online reviews before making a purchase decision, and 83% of them believe that the online reviews influence their purchase decision. Besides, it is known that eWOM shapes consumers' attitudes toward a product, thereby facilitating or inhibiting their purchase intentions and behaviors, which could eventually affect the overall sales of the product (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

In the context of SNS, eWOM occurs when consumers provide or search for informal product-related advice. For example, consumers can associate themselves with brands explicitly by becoming a friend or fan. Voluntary exposure to brand information in SNSs is more important because consumers are seeking ways to interact with brands and other consumers, which promotes truly interactive eWOM. Another important characteristic that makes SNS unique from other eWOM media is that users' social networks are readily available on SNS. Since eWOM via SNS is performed on a basis of members of consumers' existing networks, it is perceived as more trustworthy and credible so that it becomes an important source of product information for consumers (Chu, 2011). Therefore, this study aims to explain what factors promote users' eWOM activities in WeChat-based social commerce.

More specifically, this study focuses on the multidimensional trust that customers perceive in the context of social commerce based on SNS namely, WeChat in China. That is, we examine customer trust as a multidimensional concept including contents trust, source trust, and platform trust. It has been long argued that trust is a key factor that leads to customers' purchasing intentions and behaviors particularly, in electronic(e-) commerce where a high level of transaction risks exist (Gefen, 2000; Gefen et al., 2003; Ko and Choi, 2005; McKnight et al., 2002; Pavlou and Gefen, 2002). Previous studies also agree that trust can be viewed as a multidimensional concept. For example, Mayer et al. (1995) proposed that trustworthiness leading to trust intention is composed of ability, benevolence, and integrity. Gefen et al. (2003) argued that trust intention is formed by various sources of trust, such as knowledge-based trust (i.e., familiarity with the e-vendor), calculative-based trust, and institution-based trust (i.e., situation normality and structural assurance). Although trust has received much attention as a key concept in understanding customers' purchasing behaviors in e-commerce, little is known about the

mechanisms that customers build trust in social commerce based on SNS and how the trust is associated with key commerce activities such as purchasing and eWOM. Therefore, this study aims to identify various aspects of customer trust that SNS users perceive in social commerce based SNS and further verify its key determinants and outcomes.

Ⅱ. Theory and Hypothesis

2.1. Multidimensional Trust

It is important to approach customer trust from multidimensional perspectives in that each trust dimension reflects different aspects of WeChat-based social commerce. Concerning the main dimensions of trust in online communities, Johnson and Kaye (2002) proposed three primary dimensions such as content credibility, source credibility, and medium credibility and argued that dimensions are interrelated (Kang, 2010). Content credibility refers to the informational quality and accuracy of messages itself that users obtain from online communities, whereas source credibility denotes the perceived trustworthiness of the source that provides the messages (Kang, 2010). Medium credibility refers to the perceived level of credibility that users have of a specific medium, such as newspapers, television, the Internet, or blogs (Sundar and Nass, 2001). Moreover, when individuals consider a medium to be credible, they are more likely to rely on information obtained from the medium (i.e., trust transfer phenomena). Therefore, this study conceptualizes customer trust in WeChat-based social commerce with three dimensions such as contents trust, source trust, and platform trust.

2.1.1. Contents Trust

Although previous studies generally agree that contents quality of eWOM is closely related to contents trust (Cheung et al., 2009; Shen and Park, 2015), there is no general agreement on the dimensions of contents quality (Angst and Agarwal, 2009). In the context of eWOM through online communities, Cheung et al. (2009) considered consensus, timeliness, and accuracy as main components of contents quality. Cheon and Lee (2012) argued that contents quality depends on consensus, vividness, and neutrality and verified that these three components have a significant effect on contents trust. Lee et al. (2011) clarified that the determinants of contents trust are consensus, timeliness and playfulness, and proved that these factors have a high impact on information acceptance attitude and eWOM intention. In the context of eWOM through SNS (i.e., WeiBo), Shen and Park (2015) proposed three dimensions of contents quality such as vividness, consensus, and timeliness and found that they have a positive influence on contents trust. Based on the previous studies, this study considers vividness and consensus of contents as main components of contents quality. Additionally, this study also includes timeliness as a component of contents trust, proposed by Shen and Park (2015), recognizing that eWOM via WeChat-based social commerce emphasizes the rapid spread of contents.

First of all, vividness refers to the degree of contents' specificity, reality, and vivid (Chiou and Cheng, 2003; Coyle and Thorson, 2001). Compared to offline commerce, eWOM users are able to use photo and/or video attachments and a variety of multimedia tools at the same time. Nowadays, the vividness of information is greatly enhanced through augmented realism and concreteness of information (Lee and

Lee, 2005). Vividness of information enhances trust in contents, allowing customers to have vicarious experience on products and services (Coyle and Thorson, 2001). Besides, the vivid information accompanies a high level of confidence and customers are more likely to trust eWOM information including vivid contents (Cheon and Lee, 2012; Shen and Park, 2015). In the same vein, this study posits that vivid contents conveyed by WeChat would enhance contents trust.

Second, consensus denotes the degree of users' agreement with the contents and the number of recommendation and comments (Chiou and Cheng, 2003; Elliott, 2002). The information in consensus has a more significant effect in interpersonal communication than no consensus information, whether it is true or not, people tend to believe the information (Chiou and Cheng, 2003). As the increase in the scope and amount of online review in e-commerce, consensus of the review functions as a key criterion influencing customers' purchasing decision making (Hur et al., 2009). Customers tend to believe online review not only with lots of comments, but also with a general consensus among other customers (Elliott, 2002; Park and Lee, 2014). Likewise, it is asserted that contents trust is positively affected by online comments with high levels of consensus among many people. Similarly, in WeChat-based social commerce, customers would rely on the figure of viewers and the number of the product recommendation shared by other users. This enables potential customers to evaluate the consistency of the comments based on the review record. Therefore, this study proposes that contents with consensus would enhance contents trust.

Finally, timeliness refers to the degree to which contents are provided up-to-date, constantly, and timely (Chiou and Cheng, 2003; Kim and Kim, 2010;

Nelson et al., 2005). Considering that SNS is a useful platform for promoting the rapid spread of information, timeliness is a key factor of evaluating contents quality and it contributes to the increase of contents trust (Hanna and Wozniak, 2001). In the context of online shopping, Shin (2012) asserted that the value of information disappears when the information loses timeliness. That is, when customers do not obtain necessary information when needed, it is difficult to create trust in the information. Therefore, this study proposes that timeliness increases trust in contents.

H1a: Vividness of contents is positively associated with contents trust.
H1b: Consensus of contents is positively associated with contents trust.
H1c: Timeliness of contents is positively associated with contents trust

2.1.2. Source Trust

Source trust of contents is defined as the extent to which one perceives other people's recommendation as believable, true, and factual (Tseng and Fogg, 1999). As an aspect of customer trust, source trust represents the attributes of the information provider. Information receivers could consider product recommendation as strong persuasive information when they can identify the information provider clearly (Shan, 2016). Studies of interpersonal communication have indicated that a communicator's characteristics have a significant effect on the persuasiveness of information (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Hovland et al., 1953). Hovland and Weiss (1951) have shown that the credibility of information is increased by the communicator's characteristics such as credibility, attractiveness, physical appearance, fa-

miliarity, and power. Likewise, contents providers' characteristics would influence the trust in source of contents (i.e., source trust).

Concerning key determinants of source trust, source trustworthiness has attracted wide attention (Flanagin and Metager, 2007; Gill et al., 2005; Lowry et al., 2014; Mou and Cohen, 2016; Park and Kim, 2008; Yiga and Chan, 2016). The concept of trustworthiness is proposed by Mayer et al. (1995) and it is asserted as a concept consisting of ability, benevolence, and integrity of the trustee. McKnight et al. (2002) used the term competence instead of ability in e-commerce settings. Competence means that the information provider has necessary skills and competencies. Whereas benevolence describes the extent to which the information provider is willing to do good to the information receiver, integrity refers to the extent to which the information provider adheres to a set of principles that the information receiver finds acceptable. Based on these studies, we consider competence (i.e., ability), benevolence, and integrity as main dimensions of source trustworthiness in contents providers and propose the positive relationships of these dimensions and source trust.

More specifically, McKnight et al. (2002) defined trusting beliefs (i.e., trustworthiness) as a concept consisting of benevolence, integrity, and competence in an online vendor and proved their impacts on trusting intentions. In the context of Internet banking, Yiga and Chan (2016) asserted that trustworthiness of banks enhances customers' attitude and behavioral intention of its use. Mou and Cohen (2016) contended that trust in online health information is an important issue because of the risks derived from its errors and unverified contents and that it influences trust in its providers as well as the evaluation of information quality. Shan (2016) argued that source

trust of online reviews is dependent on reviewers' similarity and expertise. Accordingly, the information of receivers such as profiles and past reviews affects the receivers' information evaluation. Particularly, it is argued that in the early stage of the persuasion process, source credibility influences a receiver' evaluation of the information (Wathen and Burkell, 2002). Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2a: Competence of contents provider is positively associated with source trust.
H2b: Benevolence of contents provider is positively associated with source trust.
H2c: Integrity of contents provider is positively associated with source trust.

2.1.3. Platform Trust

In communication and media research, the uses and gratifications (U&G) model is proposed to explain how social media is utilized to fulfill individual users' needs with different goals, assuming that they distinguish different forms of media, based on their needs that they expect to fulfill through the use of media (Katz et al., 1973). The model also addresses that users have specific ultimate goals before they decide to use a particular technology. Applying U&G model, previous studies have identified various needs that users want to obtain through the use of social media. Sangwan (2005) suggested that the fulfillment of user needs leads to users' satisfaction as well as their intention to continue to visit a virtual community. Papacharissi and Mendelson (2011) have used U&G model to better understand users' various needs and desires that they want to satisfy through Facebook use. In the same vein, it is expected that platform trust in WeChat as a medium for social commerce

is influenced by customers' specific needs.

As customers' key needs to participate in eWOM based on WeChat, this study considers the instrumental need and the social need and further proposes that they are positively associated with platform trust. Studies of eWOM have addressed the reasons why people adopt eWOM namely, a collection of user-generated online comments (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003). First of all, the instrumental need arises because people want to solve certain problems by gathering information, such as advices from other customers. Customers could obtain information through targeted searches or by chance through general product-related searches (Ward and Ostrom, 2003). Although some people might count on other people's experience to solve their problems, they could also use available information and combine it with other accessible information. Regardless of the type of information, reviews and comments from other people provide a wider range of information to help resolve issues (Dholakia et al., 2009), which in turn reduces the risk related to purchases (Dowling and Staelin, 1994), by satisfying information search demands (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1987). Therefore, when customers' instrumental need is fulfilled with information provided through WeChat, platform trust in WeChat would be increased.

Second, the social need has been also considered as another factor affecting users' attitudes and behaviors particularly, in the context of online communities where social functions are highlighted, by allowing users to interact with others who have a common interest. Given that SNS is used as a platform to share information and to conduct recommendations, trust in the platform would be closely related to users' social need fulfillment. In the context of a corporate SNS platform, Hung et al. (2011) found

that users' social need fulfilment determines platform trust which affects their searching and purchasing behaviors. Based on the findings, they asserted that to enhance trust in a corporate SNS platform, it is important to develop social relationship among users. In the same vein, when a user' social need to interact with other people and to follow their opinions is fulfilled, platform trust in WeChat would be increased. Based on the above discussion, we establish the following hypotheses:

H3a: Instrumental need fulfillment is positively associated with platform trust in WeChat.
H3b: Social need fulfillment is positively associated with platform trust in WeChat.

2.2. Consequences of Multidimensional Trust

2.2.1. Effects of Contents Trust on eWOM and Purchase Intentions

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) provides a general framework for our proposed model which explains how three types of trust influence eWOM and purchase intentions. According to the theory, one's attitude toward a certain behavior is determined his or her intentions to act that are influenced by attitudes which are determined by various beliefs on the behavior. That is, a set of specific beliefs (e.g., contents quality) function as determinants of a general belief (e.g., contents trust), thereby affecting eWOM and purchasing intentions in social commerce (Gefen et al., 2003; Ko and Choi, 2005; McKnight et al., 2002).

Moreover, previous studies have argued that customer trust is positively associated with eWOM and purchase intention (Chang and Dong, 2016; Park

and Kim, 2008; Wen et al., 2012). Park and Kim (2008) show that customers usually rely on comments and information available online to make their purchase decision. Wen et al. (2012) suggest that trust influences online purchase intention. Chang and Dong (2016) assert that consumers' purchasing intention is determined by cognitive trust related to the capability and credibility of the provided contents, in the context of SNS-based purchasing. Likewise, a customer who perceives contents to be credible is more willing to adopt them and to use them for purchase decisions (Nabi and Hendriks, 2003). Therefore, this study proposes that contents trust would positively influence users' eWOM and purchase intentions.

H4a: *Contents trust in WeChat is positively associated with eWOM intentions.*

H4b: *Contents trust in WeChat is positively associated with purchase intentions.*

2.2.2. Effects of Source Trust on eWOM and Purchase Intentions

In e-commerce, customers are difficult to evaluate the trustworthiness of other customers as well as online sellers due to the impersonality, anonymity, and automation of electronic transactions and communications. Trust helps reduce such opportunism and vulnerability that customers perceive in e-commerce by allowing them to subjectively reduce undesirable yet possible behaviors of sellers. As such, trust can help customers decrease their risk perceptions when conducting online shopping, thereby promoting them to participate in the "trust-related behaviors" with sellers, such as information sharing and purchase behaviors (McKnight et al., 2002).

Source trust is considered as one of the key factors that affect the informational influence process

(Sussman and Siegal, 2003; Tormala and Clarkson, 2007; Zhang and Watts, 2008). It is generally asserted that trust in the source of information are closely related to customers' eWOM and behavioral intentions (Mcknight and Chervany, 2001; Lee and Turban, 2001; Lee and Lee, 2004). Hur et al. (2012) argued that users put more emphasis on source trust in that information obtained through SNS contains the subjective judgment of an information provider. Along with trust in contents, the provision of a content provider's information is important for evaluating the credibility of the content source, thereby promoting eWOM (Baek et al., 2014). Therefore, in the context of SNS, users are willing to open their profile to create higher source credibility, which leads to higher trust. Based on the above discussion, this study proposes that trust in information providers in WeChat-based social commerce would increase eWOM and purchase intentions.

H5a: *Source trust in WeChat is positively associated with eWOM intentions.*

H5b: *Source trust in WeChat is positively associated with purchase intentions.*

2.2.3. Effects of Platform Trust on eWOM and Purchase Intentions

In e-commerce, various types of trust have emerged, such as trust in the website, trust in technologies, and trust in security and privacy. Particularly, the lack of trust in the website for online shopping is a main reason that customers are reluctant to make a purchase in e-commerce where they should provide their personal information for the transaction (Gummerus et al., 2004). More specifically, the trust in the website as a commerce platform is distinguished from the trust in retailers which

are selling products and services on the website. These two types of trust individually influence eWOM and purchase behaviors by reducing uncertainty and anxiety about online shopping (Kim et al., 2009; Lu et al., 2010; McKnight et al., 2002).

In this study, platform trust refers to the trust in SNS (i.e., WeChat) as a commerce platform. Similar to trust in the website, this study assumes that platform trust in WeChat will be positively associated with users' eWOM and purchase intentions. Previous studies of eWOM via SNS have contended that trust in SNS is a key determinant of eWOM (Kim et al., 2009). In social commerce, it has been proved that trust has an essential role in enhancing intention to buy (Lu et al., 2010). Therefore, in WeChat-based social commerce, users are more willing to participate in eWOM and purchase behaviors when they perceive it as a commerce platform to be more reliable.

H6a: Platform trust in WeChat will be positively associated with eWOM intentions.

H6b: Platform trust in WeChat will be positively associated with purchase intentions.

2.3. Trust Transfer Theory

Trust building mechanisms have been a key issue in e-commerce. According to McKnight et al. (2003), there are three major mechanisms to build customer trust: institution-based trust, knowledge-based trust, and trust transfer between different types of trust. Institution-based trust focuses on building trust through a variety of institutional structures such as feedback system, escrow services, credit card guarantees, and intermediary (Pavlou, 2002). Knowledge- based trust means that people's trust in one party can be based on their prior inter-

actions with the party (Gefen et al., 2003). Trust transfer refers to a trust mechanism that one's trust in an unknown person or object can be derived from his or her trust in a known person/object who has certain association with the unknown person or object (Stewart, 2003).

Further, the trust transfer occurs in the relationship between source and target with similarity and business tie (Stewart et al., 2003). Similarity refers to the internal relationship between source and target, and thereby they share certain same innate features which make people have same perceptions about them. Business tie explains the external relationship between source and target, and thereby they share certain external cues. For example, when the source and the target belong to the same company, people could form same perceptions on source and target (Stewart et al., 2003). Drawing upon the literature of trust transfer, this study proposes that user's trust in contents informed by other users of WeChat can be influenced by source and platform trust. People are likely to develop contents trust when they have higher trust in source (i.e., the provider of the contents) and trust in platform (i.e., WeChat). Moreover, this study assumes that platform trust is influenced by trust in source. That is, people are likely to develop platform trust (i.e., trust in WeChat), when they have high levels of trust in friends who are registered on WeChat. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H7a: Source trust is positively associated with contents trust.

H7b: Source trust is positively associated with platform trust.

*H7c: Platform trust is positively associated with contents trust.*

2.4. The Proposed Research Model

Based on the above discussion, this study proposes the research model as depicted in <Figure 1>. First of all, the model proposes three different types of trust in WeChat-based commerce such as contents trust, source, trust, and platform trust. Second, the model proposes key determinants of three different types of trust and their impacts on eWOM and purchase intentions. Finally, the model explains the trust transfer phenomena in multidimensional trust.

The underlying idea of the model is that in trust conceptualizations, a set of specific beliefs determine general beliefs meaning that a certain object can be trusted (Gefen, 2000; Gefen et al., 2003; Mayer et al., 1995). They also assert that a general belief results in behavioral intentions. For example, Mayer et al. (1995) proposed trustworthiness as a specific belief, which consists of ability, benevolence, and integrity, and trust as a general belief. Moreover, they contended trustworthiness as a determinant of trust. In line with this idea, this study regards three different types of trust as a general belief and asserts that they are influenced by specific beliefs. Furthermore, three types of trust lead to eWOM and purchase intentions.

The model also suggests that users' trust is formed by not only commercial characteristics but also community ones in the context of WeChat-based commerce. Considering that WeChat is a typical smartphone-based SNS, the community characteristics of WeChat as SNSs would influence users' trusting building. Therefore, this study proposes that users' trusting building in WeChat-based commerce is influenced by both community and commerce perspectives.
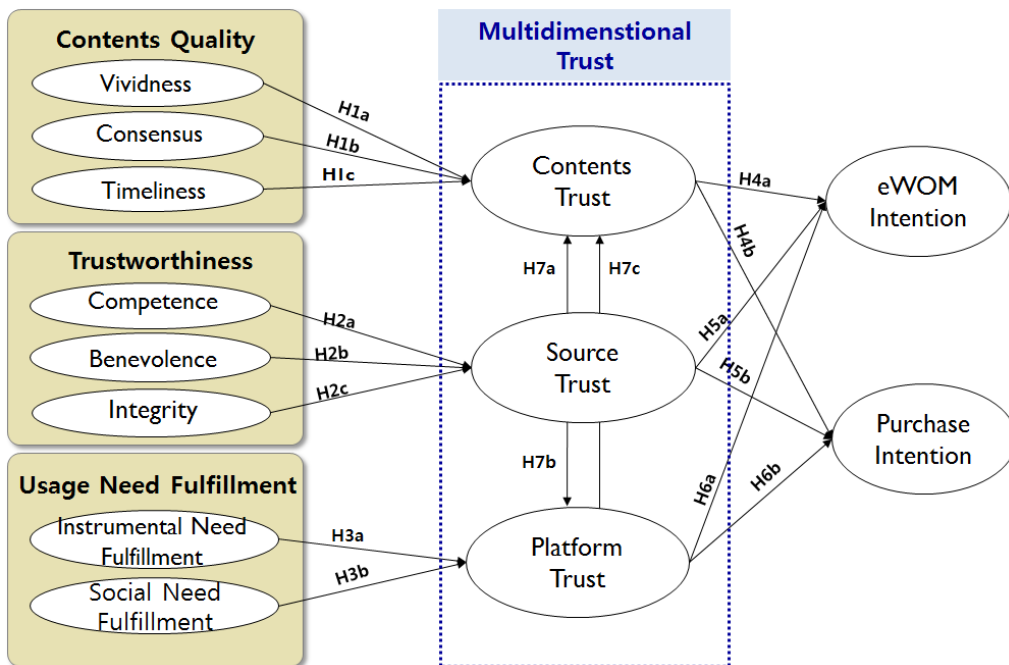
<Figure 1> Research Model

Ⅲ. Methods

3.1. Measures

This study used instruments validated in previous research, and all of the constructs included in the proposed research model were measured using multi-item scales adapted from prior studies that reported high reliability and validity. And then we modified the items slightly to reflect the context of SNS-based social commerce. All questionnaire items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

In this study, the contents quality dimension consists of three constructs such as vividness, timeliness, and consensus. Vividness is defined as a user's perceptions of the degree of contents' specificity, reality, and vivid and its items were adapted from Chiou and Cheng (2003) and Coyle and Thorson (2001). Timeliness is defined as a user's perceptions of the degree to which contents are provided up-to-date, constantly, and timely and its measures were adapted from Chiou and Cheng (2003) and Nelson et al. (2005). Consensus is defined as a user's perceptions of the degree of users' agreement with the contents and the number of recommendation and comments and its items were derived from Chiou and Cheng (2003) and Elliott (2002).

The measures of source trustworthiness are derived from Flavian et al. (2006), McKnight and Chervany (2002), and Mayer et al. (1995) in reference to user's perceptions of competence, integrity and benevolence of source. Competence refers to a user's perceptions of the extent of providers' ability and knowledge. Benevolence refers to a user's perceptions of providers' degree of giving kindness to consumers. Integrity refers to a user's perceptions of providers' degree of complying with principles acceptable to consumers.

To measure user need fulfillment of platform, this study derives items for instrumental need fulfillment from Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003), Goldsmith and Horowita (2006), and Kwon and Onwuegbuzie (2005), and items for social need fulfillment from Cheung and Lee (2009), Dholakia et al. (2004), and Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006).

Considering the context of social commerce based on WeChat, we define customer trust as a multidimensional concept consisting of contents trust, source trust, and platform trust. To measure contents trust, its items were adapted from Cheung et al. (2009) and Wathen and Burkell (2002). The scales for source trust were derived from Park and Kim (2008). Items for platform trust were adapted from Mayer et al. (1995) and Gefen et al. (2000).

eWOM intention is defined as a user's willingness to recommend or share the contents to others and its measures were derived from McKnight and Chervany (2002) and Chiou and Cheng (2003).

Purchase intention is defined as a user's willingness to purchase from WeChat and its items were derived from Sam and Tahir (2010) and Jarvenpaa et al. (2000). The details of items are presented in <Table 1>.

3.2. Data Collection and Sample

To empirically test our research model and hypotheses, we collected data on through online surveys from WeChat users in China during January and February 2016. We received a total of 647 responses. After eliminating 86 responses, a total of 561 responses were ultimately used for the analysis. <Table 2> shows the demographics of our sample. Among the 561 respondents, 249 (44.4 %) were male and 312 (55.6 %) were female. In our sample, 57.2 percent-

<Table 1> Measurement Items

Constructs	Items	References
Vividness	1. The provided contents are specific. 2. The provided contents are factual. 3. In WeChat the contents is provided with attached pictures or videos that the information is delivered vividly.	Chiou and Cheng (2003), Coyle and Thorson (2001)
Consensus	1. A large number comments or "I like". 2. It is recommended by many friends in WeChat. 3. The contents are agreed by a lot of people in WeChat.	Chiou and Cheng (2003), Elliott (2002)
Timeliness	1. I know much up-to-date information related to the product through information posted on WeChat. 2. Contents are updated fast and continuously. 3. Contents are provided timely	Chiou and Cheng (2003), Nelson et al. (2005)
Competence	1. Be experienced with the engaging goods. 2. Know his own products well. 3. Have a lot of knowledge about his own products 4. Can provide a variety of product information	Flavian et al. (2006), Mayer et al. (1995), McKnight and Chervany (2002)
Benevolence	1. Have a good intention to provide information. 2. Providers take care of the customer's requirements and needs. 3. Information is recommended for mutual benefit. 4. Try to accept customer requirements.	
Integrity	1. Provide honest answers and sincere suggestions. 2. Carry out promise about service contents. 3. Provide information to others without falsehood. 4. Have a responsibility to respond my needs and questions.	
Instrumental Need Fulfillment	1. To get quick and easy access to necessary information 2. To seek advice on what I am interested in 3. To reduce the chances of making a bad purchase decision 4. To benefit from others' experiences before making a decision	Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003), Goldsmith and Horowita (2006), Kwon and Onwuegbuzie (2005)
Social Need Fulfillment	1. To communicate with other people 2. To stay in touch with others with similar interests 3. To be a valuable member in moments of WeChat 4. To get an agreement of my opinion from others of WeChat	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), Cheung and Lee (2009), Dholakia et al. (2004)
Contents Trust	1. Contents that provided in WeChat are trustworthy. 2. Contents that provided in WeChat are factual. 3. Contents that provided in WeChat are accurate.	Cheung et al. (2009), Wathen and Burkell (2002)
Source Trust	1. Contents providers are trustworthy. 2. Contents providers are honest. 3. In general Contents providers are reputable.	Park and Kim (2008)
Platform Trust	1. WeChat platform is trustworthy. 2. I believe in WeChat platform and can trade in it. 3. I believe that WeChat will handle things properly.	Gefen et al. (2000), Mayer et al. (1995)
eWOM Intention	1. I intend to actively share in my moments. 2. I would like to share the product contents with other friends. 3. I intend to recommend to others.	Chiou and Cheng (2003), McKnight and Chervany (2002)
Purchase Intention	1. Likelihood to buy. 2. Willingness to buy. 3. Intention to purchase in WeChat.	arvenpaa et al. (2000), Sam and Tahir (2010)

<Table 2> Demographics

Category		Frequency	Percent (%)	Category		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	249	44.4	Marital status	Single	302	53.8
	Female	312	55.6		Married	259	46.2
Age	Less than 20 years	45	8.0	Period of use	Less than 1 year	133	23.7
	20~29 years	321	57.2		1~2 years	216	38.5
	30~39 years	173	30.8		2~3 years	140	25.0
	40~49 years	22	3.9		3~4 years	42	7.5
Education	High school	54	9.6		More than 4 years	30	5.3
	Junior college	178	31.7	Hours of use per day	Less than 1 hour	164	29.3
	4-years college	298	53.1		1~2 hours	174	31.0
	Graduate school	31	5.5		2~3 hours	77	13.7
					3~6 hours	64	11.4
Occupation	Student	100	17.8		More than 6 hours	82	14.6
	Employee	295	52.6	Frequency of access	Many times a day	240	42.8
	Civil servant	93	16.6		More than 2 times a day	182	32.4
	Individual business	28	5.0		5~6 times a week	120	21.4
	House wife	15	2.7		More than 2 times a week	19	3.4
	No occupation	5	0.9				
	Other	25	4.5				

age of the respondents were in their thirties and the rest of the respondents were between the age of 30 and 39.

Ⅳ. Results

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

To evaluate the measurement model, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with a covariance matrix as the input by using AMOS 20.0. The results for the goodness-of-fit indices indicate that the model provided a good fit to the data: χ^2 = 1170.77 (p-value = 0.000), the degree of freedom (df) = 776, χ^2/df = 1.51 (cut-off value $\leq$ 3.0), the standardized root mean residual (SRMR) = 0.03 ($\leq$ 0.08), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.03 ($\leq$ 0.05), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.91 ($\geq$ 0.9), the adjusted goodness of fit index

(AGFI) = 0.90 ($\geq$ 0.8), the normed fit index (NFI) = 0.93 ($\geq$ 0.9), and the comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.97 ($\geq$ 0.9). Although the results show that the χ^2 value is significant (p-value < 0.001), which means that the model is regarded as unacceptable, it could be acceptable if the sample size is over 200 and other indices provide a good fit to the data. Therefore, it can be said that the measurement model is acceptable, considering the sample size of 561 and other indices.

<Table 3> shows the results for the measurement model. Concerning Cronbach's a, we confirmed that all the constructs used in this study exceeded 0.7 as suggested by Nunnally (1978), indicating satisfactory reliability. Moreover, composite reliability was above 0.735, which exceeded the recommended value of 0.7, demonstrating satisfactory reliability. Regarding convergent validity, the standardized factor loadings of items ranged from 0.702 to 0.864 and were statistically significant at

\<Table 3\> Measurement Model Assessment

Constructs	Items	Non-Standardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t-value	AVE	Construct Reliability	Cronbach's α
Vividness	VQ3	1	0.853	-	0.507	0.735	0.849
	VQ2	0.998	0.824	21.179			
	VQ1	0.824	0.750	19.195			
Consensus	CQ3	1	0.775	-	0.505	0.744	0.884
	CQ2	1.159	0.864	19.102			
	CQ1	0.971	0.733	17.286			
Timeliness	TQ3	1	0.832	-	0.520	0.765	0.821
	TQ2	0.956	0.801	18.944			
	TQ1	0.811	0.702	16.796			
Competence	CW4	1	0.805	-	0.582	0.847	0.884
	CW3	1.064	0.864	21.31			
	CW2	1.044	0.844	20.39			
	CW1	0.958	0.789	19.075			
Benevolence	BW4	1	0.760	-	0.526	0.816	0.869
	BW3	1.144	0.814	19.176			
	BW2	1.120	0.821	19.359			
	BW1	1.051	0.764	17.945			
Integrity	IW4	1	0.765	-	0.504	0.803	0.971
	IW3	1.071	0.789	18.799			
	IW2	1.131	0.816	19.479			
	IW1	1.115	0.802	19.117			
Instrumental Need Fulfillment	INF4	1	0.788	-	0.590	0.852	0.887
	INF3	1.081	0.826	20.99			
	INF2	1.163	0.860	22.008			
	INF1	1.053	0.788	19.851			
Social Need Fulfillment	SNF3	1	0.831	-	0.542	0.780	0.834
	SNF2	0.915	0.802	19.891			
	SNF1	0.847	0.744	18.353			
Contents Trust	CT3	1	0.897	-	0.600	0.816	0.872
	CT2	1	0.883	27.257			
	CT1	0.893	0.739	20.887			
Source Trust	ST3	1	0.734	-	0.534	0.773	0.852
	ST2	1.092	0.893	19.508			
	ST1	1.054	0.817	18.496			
Platform Trust	PT3	1	0.786	-	0.542	0.780	0.858
	PT2	1.156	0.886	21.011			
	PT1	1.021	0.784	19.113			
eWOM Intention	WOM3	1	0.844	-	0.607	0.822	0.890
	WOM2	1.076	0.923	26.603			
	WOM1	1.009	0.802	22.555			
Purchase Intention	PI3	1	0.836	-	0.570	0.799	0.876
	PI2	1.022	0.866	23.441			
	PI1	0.945	0.816	21.924			

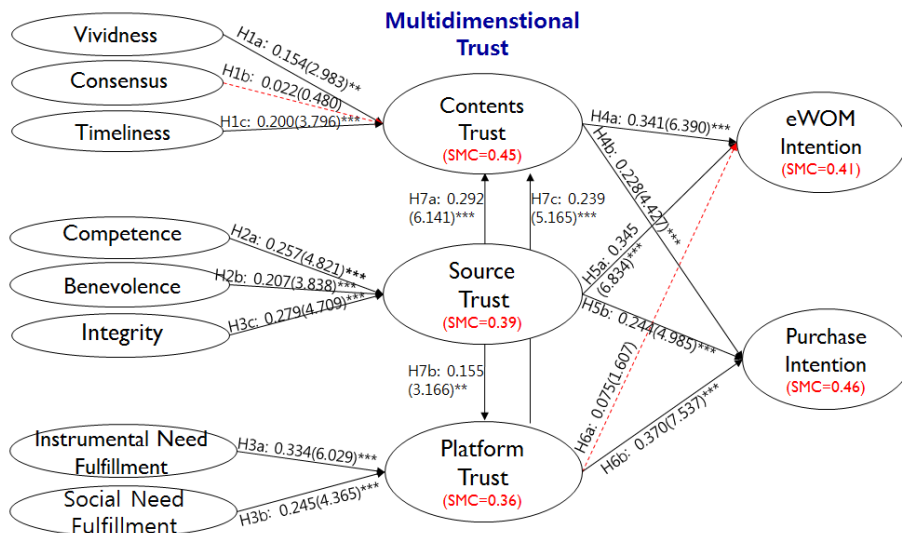Note: All items were significant at the 0.001 level.

the 0.05 level. In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) values of all the constructs are above the recommended value of 0.5 (Fornell and Lacker, 1981). Therefore, it can be said that the items used in this study had higher representativeness for the constructs. The results provide support for convergent validity. Discriminant validity is also satisfactory because the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded all other cross-correlations, as shown in <Table 4>.

<Table 4> Correlation Matrix for Measurement Scales

Constructs	VQ	CQ	TQ	CW	BW	IW	INF	SNF	CT	ST	PT	WOM	PI
VQ	**0.71**												
CQ	0.436	**0.71**											
TQ	0.534	0.442	**0.72**										
CW	0.592	0.509	0.512	**0.76**									
BW	0.437	0.389	0.503	0.468	**0.73**								
IW	0.466	0.391	0.487	0.562	0.574	**0.71**							
INF	0.503	0.428	0.516	0.566	0.563	0.549	**0.77**						
SNF	0.504	0.441	0.455	0.633	0.563	0.541	0.549	**0.74**					
CT	0.455	0.332	0.473	0.539	0.552	0.529	0.561	0.573	**0.77**				
ST	0.421	0.318	0.431	0.466	0.450	0.516	0.484	0.524	0.532	**0.74**			
PT	0.375	0.355	0.373	0.437	0.442	0.493	0.504	0.465	0.487	0.442	**0.74**		
WOM	0.439	0.361	0.419	0.497	0.494	0.441	0.488	0.521	0.558	0.544	0.371	**0.78**	
PI	0.460	0.446	0.435	0.541	0.492	0.513	0.505	0.563	0.536	0.508	0.572	0.474	**0.75**

Note: ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$. Values along the diagonal indicate the square root of the AVE. VQ(Vividness), CQ(Consensus), TQ(Timeliness), CW(Competence), BW(Benevolence), IW(Integrity), INF(Instrumental Need Fulfillment), SNF(Social Need Fulfillment), CT(Contents Trust), ST(Source Trust), PT(Platform Trust), WOM(eWOM Intention), PI(Purchase Intention).

<Figure 2> Results of Structural Model

Note: Standardized path coefficient (*t*-value), ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

4.2. Research Model and Hypothesis Testing

To test the proposed model and hypotheses, we employed the structural equation modeling method with AMOS 21.0. <Figure 2> shows the results of testing research model and hypotheses. The model provided a good fit of the data: χ^2 = 1320.37 (*p*-value = 0.000), *df* = 806, χ^2/df = 1.64, SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.03, GFI = 0.90, AGFI = 0.89, NFI = 0.92, and CFI = 0.97. It can be said that the structural model is acceptable although its χ^2 value is significant (*p* < 0.001), considering the sample size of 561 and other indices evaluated as being acceptable. <Figure 2> provides the values of the standardized path coefficients and their significance along with the results of hypotheses testing. The results provide support for fifteen of the seventeen hypotheses proposed in this study, except the hypothesis H1b and H6a. Further discussion of each result is provided in the Conclusions section.

V. Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

Most studies have focused on the typical function of SNS that supports users' social activities to establish and maintain their social relationships. By contrast, this study demonstrated the role of SNS as a commerce platform. More specifically, we proposed and verified a theoretical model that includes three different types of trust (i.e., contents, source, and platform trust) that users consider in WeChat-based social commerce and the antecedents and consequences of each trust. Moreover, the study proved trust transfer phenomena among three types of trust. Finally, this study verified the effects of each trust on eWOM

and purchase intentions. The details of the results are presented as below.

First of all, the results show that three types of trust have direct, positive effects on eWOM and purchase intentions. That is, users evaluate trust with various aspects in WeChat-based social commerce and their eWOM and purchase intentions vary depending on each trust. More specifically, our results show that eWOM intention is enhanced by contents and source trust but not by platform trust, whereas purchase intention is enhanced by contents, source, and platform trust. The findings suggest that to promote customers' purchase intention in WeChat-based social commerce, it is important to develop all types of trust, including contents, source, and platform trust. It is a noteworthy finding that platform trust has the strongest impact on purchase intention. This implies that trust in WeChat as a social commerce platform is a key issue of determining users' purchase intention.

Meanwhile, eWOM intention is increased by contents trust and source trust, but not by platform trust. Regarding the insignificant effect of platform trust on eWOM intention, one possible interpretation is that eWOM is greatly influenced by source trust namely, friends connected via WeChat. Users can identify the source of information (i.e., details of information providers) because they mostly know every friend registered on the friend list of WeChat. Our findings imply that users are more willing to participate in eWOM when they perceive the contents and their providers to be credible. In the situation that users have insufficient knowledge regarding a variety of products to make a purchasing decision, they try to find reliable knowledge from others. Our results suggest that friends who are registered on WeChat can function as a reliable source of knowledge needed to make a purchase. Therefore, trust

in the contents provider plays a key role in promoting eWOM activities in WeChat-based social commerce. Relatively, trust in WeChat as a platform which is used to convey contents does not matter, given that WeChat has already achieved a dominant position in the industry. Furthermore, our results demonstrate that although platform trust has no direct effect on eWOM intention, it can be transferable to contents trust. Hence, future research needs to reconsider the role of platform trust in enhancing eWOM intention.

With regard to the trust transfer phenomena, the results indicate that source trust (i.e., the trust in content providers) is transferable to contents trust and platform trust. Moreover, platform trust is also transferable to contents trust. Therefore, although platform trust has nothing to do with eWOM intention, it indirectly influences eWOM intention via contents trust. The findings imply that trust in content providers is essential in developing other types of trust in WeChat-based social commerce. In other words, users' contents and platform trust are increased, when they have higher trust in their friends who provide information on WeChat.

Concerning antecedents of each type of trust, our results demonstrate that contents trust is increased by vividness and timeliness, but not by consensus. That is, when users have vicarious experience through information with vivid description of products and services (i.e., vividness) and such information is delivered when necessary (i.e., timeliness), contents trust is enhanced. In fact, in WeChat-based social commerce, the main advantage is that users are able to share product information in time. Besides, such information is generated by friends who are connected via SNS, along with actual pictures of products. Therefore, users perceive the contents of a product to be more factual. Meanwhile, the consensus of contents among other users has nothing to do with

contents trust. The finding implies that the number of comments or "likes" does not ensure trust in contents. Similarly, Shen and Park (2015) verified that contents consensus has no effect on contents trust, due to the actual usage characteristics of Weibo. Although Weibo users generally read the contents generated by their followers, they do not take note of other users' response to the contents. In the context of WeChat, it can be explained that users do not pay much attention to the consensus of contents because those who are not registered on the friend list cannot verify other users' responses to the contents.

The results also prove that source trust is dependent on the content provider's trustworthiness namely, competence, benevolence, and integrity. Therefore, to enhance source trust, it is necessary to provide the details of information providers. In other words, it is important to make the source of contents more transparent and less anonymous, by providing the information provider's profiles such as real names, location, and personal interests, past activities, and a record of previous posts and reviews.

Finally, our results show that platform trust is determined by users' usage needs such as instrumental need and social need. That is, when users could obtain useful product information (instrumental need) and build social relationships with others (social need) on SNS, they consider the SNS to be reliable.

In conclusion, this study indicates that customer trust in WeChat-based social commerce can be understood as three different types of trust (i.e., contents trust, source trust, and platform trust). Furthermore, each trust is dependent on different antecedents and further leads to different outcomes.

5.2. Implications for Research and Practice

The academic contributions of this study are as follows. First of all, this study verified three types of customer trust in Wechat-based social commerce such as contents, source, and platform trust. Although contents trust and source trust have been most attention, there is a lack of understanding of platform trust. Given that SNS-based social commerce is rapidly emerging as a main e-commerce platform, it is essential to understand the role of trust in the new platform. This study has a contribution by considering and testing platform trust as one of the key dimensions of customer trust in the context of vious studies have emphasized the role of contents trust as a central route on purchase decisions, this study suggests that platform trust considered as a peripheral route has the strongest impact on purchase decisions. That is, this study can provide a new insight by showing that the central route can be replaced with a new emerging factor in SNS-based social commerce.

Second, this study has a contribution by proving the trust transfer phenomena among sub-dimensions of customer trust. In particular, our results suggest that source trust is the fundamental trust leading to contents trust and platform trust. In other words, this study suggests that in SNS-based social commerce, trust in a content provider namely, trust in friends who are interconnected via SNS plays a key role in developing other types of trust.

Finally, this study suggests that each trust is dependent on different factors so that it is important to understand its individual determinants. This study has a contribution by proposing and testing main determinants for each trust.

The findings can provide several implications to practitioners. First, this study suggests that users' eWOM and purchase intentions are determined by various types of customer trust in SNS-based social commerce, such as contents, source, and platform trust. Therefore, practitioners should understand various aspects of trust that users perceive in SNS-based social commerce. Particularly, it is noteworthy that source trust has a considerable impact on eWOM and purchase intentions. This implies that trust in friends who deliver information on products and services plays a key role in purchase decisions.

Second, this study recommends that sellers should attempt to form source trust as a priority, by showing that source trust is a basis of developing contents and platform trust. In fact, users are more willing to participate in SNS-based social commerce because they depend on their social networks built in SNS as a key source of information. That is, this study emphasizes that friends who are interconnected by Wechat are the main source that customers can obtain information needed for social commerce.

Third, platform trust has nothing to do with eWOM intention, while it is closely related to purchase intention. Rather, eWOM intention is determined by source and contents trust. Therefore, sellers attempt to enhance source and contents trust to facilitate customers' eWOM. Furthermore, to increase customers' purchase intention, sellers attempt to develop trust in Wechat as a commerce platform along with contents and source trust. This is a noteworthy finding that previous research has not provided.

Finally, this study suggests key determinants for each trust. Therefore, sellers develop each trust by applying core determinants proposed in this study. More specifically, sellers can enhance contents trust by contents quality such as vividness and timeliness, source trust by trustworthiness such as competence, benevolence, and integrity, and platform trust by usage need fulfillment such as instrument need and social need.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

Despite the progress made by this research, it has some limitations: first, there could be a basis due to the potential for self-selection effects in our sample, it would be unlikely that we obtained data from users with low trust in contents that posted on WeChat.

Second, this study did not consider levels of involvement and knowledge of receivers which has been argued as a key factor affecting people' purchasing and information acceptance decisions through the central and peripheral routes, according to the elaboration-likelihood model (Bhattacherjee and Sanford, 2006). Therefore, future research expands our research by considering such an issue argued by the elaboration-likelihood model.

Third, this study did not consider the process of building trust over time, so future research can conduct longitudinal studies of the differential effects of multidimensional trust over time.

Finally, we only focused on the positive aspects of customer trust on eWOM reviews, rather than considering consumers' revenge and dysfunctional behaviors. Therefore, future research is encouraged to investigate positive and negative aspects of eWOM reviews.

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