

# Research on the Factors Influencing the Prolonged Spread of Internet Buzzwords

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## Abstract

After research the influencing factors of the persistent dissemination of Internet buzzwords and determine the deep mechanism of Internet buzzwords becoming strong memes, we can use some key conditions to achieve the corresponding dissemination needs, or limit and weaken certain conditions in the corresponding steps to reduce the popularity or durability of the dissemination and provide a useful reference for the spread and management practices of Internet buzzwords. By collecting data of typical and representative buzzwords from 2011 to 2018, we use the crisp set qualitative comparative analysis method to explore the key influence factors of buzzwords' channels, events and structural characteristics on their lasting spread. The research found that there are 8 effective paths for persistent dissemination, which can be summarized into five modes: public figure channels, ordinary people channels, authoritative forwarding channels, appealed genotypes buzzwords, and exogenous buzzwords.

## Keywords

Internet Buzzwords; Memetics; Qualitative Comparative Analysis; Famous.

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## 1. Introduction

In October 2016, a user uploaded a recorded video after he lost his love. The video showed the user's "uncomfortable, want to cry" with a local accent. These words have been assimilated, disseminated, and evolved on the Internet, resulting in various derivatives such as words and pictures. The incident caused a user's own emotional vocabulary to become an Internet buzzword "blue thin shiitake mushroom", which became popular in a short time. However, as time has grown, this vocabulary has gradually faded out of the user's field of vision in less than a year, and even some users have developed negative feelings of boredom after seeing this online vocabulary. Some other buzzwords, such as "positive energy" and "call", have gradually become popular languages on the Internet and in daily life. These newly created words stand out from the Internet, are known to the general public, and appear in major social media and platforms to spread quickly. But what causes some buzzwords to spread for a long time, and eventually become part of common words, is the question that this article needs to study.

## 2. Literature review and model construction

Judging from research at home and abroad, the development, dissemination and evolution of Internet buzzwords are mostly explained by memetic theory [1]. Meme is defined as the unit of cultural transmission and is similar to genes in the transmission process [2]. From the perspective of research content, memetic theory is mostly used to explain some linguistic phenomena in network information dissemination. However, there are few empirical studies and the explanation is not strong. There are

also a few studies from another perspective, such as using Roland Bart's intertextuality theory in text theory to interpret Internet buzzwords, and complete the evolution of buzzwords through motivations such as role authority, technological evolution, interactive communication, and surge of meaning [3]. Or others analyze the theoretical dimensions of Internet buzzwords from the perspectives of symbols, memes, interpersonal communication and group communication [4]. There is also an explanation of the spread of memes by applying the theory of innovation diffusion [5].

From the perspective of the development of Internet buzzwords, there are different buzzwords in different periods, and their popularity also reflects social changes to some extent. Buzzwords have significant characteristics of the times. The number of buzzwords widely spread in a certain period of time is limited. With the continuous differentiation of the Internet community, the spread of buzzwords has become more diversified. The main characteristics of Internet buzzwords are existence inside and outside the Internet, related to social events or phenomena, spontaneous production and dissemination of Internet users, unpredictable rise and fall timeliness and so on [6].

From the perspective of communication, the evolution of words from dialects to online buzzwords has been found to be determined by chance, timeliness and semantic selectivity [7]. Similar to the dissemination characteristics of internet buzzwords are internet public events. Some studies based on the nature of communication and event attributes have identified interest demands, the location of the event, the initial media, the location of the initial media, and the participation of authoritative media as the key causes and necessary conditions for the outbreak of mass network incidents [8]. Therefore, subsequent research on Internet buzzwords also draws on the characteristics of group events, and summarizes the micro-path of the spread of Internet buzzwords [9], through the attributes of public events, the creation of buzzwords, emotional expression methods, emotional content, Six micro-factors such as mainstream media adoption, whether it contains public appeal and so on. Most of the existing researches analyze the composition and corpus of internet buzzwords. Therefore, the research in this article focuses on the spreading influence mechanism of Internet buzzwords, and analyzes the microscopic influence mechanism of Internet buzzwords more deeply.

In this research, the selection of conditions mainly adopts a problem-oriented approach, and how to jointly influence the popularization of Internet buzzwords by studying the basic characteristics and various attributes of Internet buzzwords. According to the characteristic attributes of popular Internet buzzwords, this research summarizes the variables into three parts of content, namely media characteristics, event characteristics and content characteristics. According to the characteristics of the above three aspects, study its influence on the lasting spread of memes.

### **3. Research design**

#### **3.1 Research methods**

This article uses a qualitative comparative analysis method based on set theory to conduct research. Firstly, it is difficult to count the conditions of various influencing factors through quantitative results. Secondly, the sample size of the buzzword data collected is also a small sample. Therefore, compared with other binary or multivariate analysis methods of independent variables and dependent variables, it is more suitable for research. Qualitative Comparative Analysis is a method developed by Charles C. Ragin on the basis of set theory [10]. This method integrates the strengths of case-oriented and variable-oriented analysis methods, and can better solve complex causal relationships and possess the universality of case studies. The emergence of this method makes systematic comparison between cases possible. The core of the QCA method is the configuration comparative analysis technology, which analyzes and handles complex cases through configuration. This article chooses the clear set qualitative comparative analysis (csQCA) for analysis according to the type of variable.

#### **3.2 Case selection and data collection**

The number of cases with better explanatory power of QCA analysis method generally does not exceed 60 [11,12]. Selecting buzzwords that can reflect a sufficient life cycle and hot events in

different periods make the case more representative. There are many Internet buzzwords that appear every year, so relatively representative cases need to be selected. By referring to the selection of authoritative media, relevant academic literature and research reports, this paper selects 45 internet buzzwords spanning from 2011 to 2018 as shown in Table 1. The end date of the buzzword dissemination data is August 31, 2019. The data of this time period is selected, on the one hand, it has a certain time span and representativeness; on the other hand, the dissemination of buzzwords has at least half a year, at this time the spread within the period has also stabilized.

Table 1 Internet buzzword information table

Year of occurrence	Internet Buzzwords
2018	Confirmed eyes; skr; official announcement
2017	freestyle; There is such an operation; Won't your conscience hurt; My heart's broken, old fellow; Give a shoutout; "Buddha XX
2016	The boat of friendship sinks when least expected; Heard bloken, wanna cly; routine; geyou lie; small goal; dance battle; melon-eating masses; Let's go, mantis shrimp flat broke; go die; The world is so big, I want to see; Tell the important thing three times;
2015	My heart is almost broken; duang; Mainly depends on temperament; Scare me to death; supply side; the force of Chaos
2014	Lost contact; Cherish what you have at the moment; male chauvinist pig; Have money to burn; No zuo no die
2013	high-end atmosphere; Concubine can't do it; local tycoon
2012	tough girl; China on the Tip of the Tongue; Yuan Fang, how do you see;a social influencer; I think I would not love anymore
2011	You know; I believe it anyway; Hold it; too delicate to bear a blow

### 3.3 Variable selection

#### 3.3.1 Media characteristics

- (1) The subject of creation. The meaning of the subject of creation is the type of group created the buzzword, namely public figures and ordinary people.
- (2) Initial release platform. The initial release platform defines the platform on which online buzzwords or network events first appear, respectively, self-media and non-self-media.
- (3) Authoritative forwarding. the important factor for language memes to become popular words is the effect of public figures and media hype <sup>[13]</sup>. Therefore, the involvement of high-influential users and traditional media in social networks has become the reason for the popularity of online buzzwords.

#### 3.3.2 Event characteristics

- (1) The source of the event. The source of the event is defined as the type of media created buzzwords, which is the personality creation of users in social media, event reporting in news media, and creation in film and television literature.
- (2) Event type. The meaning of event type is the type of event source generated buzzwords. Combining the source of events generated Internet buzzwords, the types of events are classified into natural events, social events, current affairs politics, entertainment events, and business events.
- (3) Emotional expression. buzzwords in the Internet usually reflect a certain strong emotion of Internet users. Users not only use the buzzword as the basis of information exchange, but also use the buzzword as a bearing of certain emotions.
- (4) Appeals. whether there are appeals, the causal variable, is defined as whether buzzwords carry a certain demand of Internet users and Internet users through the use of buzzwords to express dissatisfaction with a certain phenomenon and try to attract more attention.

### 3.3.3 Content characteristics

(1) Expression type. Language memes can be divided into two types: genotype and phenotype. Genotypes show the same content and different forms, and phenotypes show the same form and different contents<sup>[14]</sup>.

(2) Form change. No change in form means that the buzzword exists independently and will not be combined with other words. Variable form means that the buzzword is the core of other phrases.

(3) Form of composition. Most popular words are composed of words or phrases, so this causal variable indicates the form of expression of popular words.

Table 2 Variable selection and description

Variable type	characteristics	Variable	data	Frequency	Weights	Assignment
core variable	Media characteristics	The subject of creation CRE	ordinary people	25	0.56	1
			public figures	20	0.44	0
		Initial release platform. PLAT	self-media	30	0.67	1
			non-self-media	15	0.33	0
	Authoritative forwarding AUTH	yes	28	0.62	1	
		no	17	0.38	0	
	Event characteristics	The source of the event SRC	personality creation	25	0.56	1
			creation in film and television	8	0.18	0
			event reporting in news media	6	0.13	0
			variety show	6	0.13	0
		Event type EVE	entertainment events	28	0.62	1
			social events	13	0.29	0
	Emotional expression EMO	business events	3	0.07	0	
		current affairs politics	1	0.02	0	
	Appeals APE	Joking	31	0.69	1	
		Non-joking	14	0.31	0	
	Content characteristics	Expression type STY	no	37	0.82	1
			yes	8	0.18	0
same content and forms			15	0.33	1	
same content and different forms			12	0.27	1	
Form change REC		Homomorphic association	10	0.22	0	
		same form and different contents	8	0.18	0	
Form of composition WORD	No	35	0.78	1		
	yes	10	0.22	0		
Result variable	vitality	persistent dissemination	vocabulary	25	0.56	1
			short sentence	20	0.44	0
			The search index of buzzwords is higher than 1000 for the duration of >=110			1
			The search index of buzzwords is higher than 1000 and the duration is <110			0

### 3.3.4 Result variable

The definition of the result variable reflects whether the buzzword has great influence and the breadth and depth of spread. Some studies take the popularity of Internet buzzwords generated in public

events as the result variable. It is assumed that in the 50 days after the end of the public event, the average Baidu search index is above 1,000 as high popularity, and less than 1,000 as low popularity[9]. With reference to this setting, this study also uses the value of the Baidu search index as the result variable, but it is slightly different. For the measurement of the duration of the popular word spread, the duration of the popular word spread is defined as the duration of the search index of the buzzword higher than 1000.

### 3.3.5 Coding and assignment of variables

According to the variable design above, the value of the core variable is assigned and calibrated according to the weight of the condition. For the determination of the persistent propagation anchor point, the mean anchor point method in the csQCA method is used for assignment. The value greater than the average value is 1, and the value less than the average value is 0. According to the above calibration method, the core variable and the result variable are calibrated, and the variable assignment basis table is obtained, as shown in Table 2.

## 4. Analysis and results

### 4.1 Analysis of necessary conditions

The purpose of necessity analysis is to find the minimum condition configuration for a given result. Test whether a single condition is necessary for two results. Through the necessity analysis of univariate and combined variables, due to space limitations, only the results with consistency greater than 0.5 are listed, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Necessity test results

	conditions	inclN	RoN	covN
persistent dissemination	CRE	0.565	0.625	0.520
	PLAT	0.652	0.500	0.500
	AUTH	0.609	0.548	0.500
	SRC	0.522	0.606	0.480
	EVE	0.609	0.516	0.483
	EMO	0.739	0.536	0.567
	APE	0.652	0.300	0.417
	STY	0.739	0.643	0.630
	REC	0.739	0.393	0.500
	~WORD	0.565	0.781	0.650

There are two indicators to determine the necessity of causal variables, namely consistency and RoN. The higher the RoN (Relevance of Necessity) value, the stronger the relevance of the necessary conditions. It is generally believed that the consistency is greater than 0.8, and the value of RoN greater than 0.6 is ideal [15]. Through the necessity analysis, it can be seen that whether it is a univariate necessity analysis or a combination variable necessity analysis, no variable is a necessary condition for the occurrence of the result. Therefore, the spread of online buzzwords is not caused by a single antecedent condition. The influence of various conditional variables on the spreading effect of buzzwords is interdependent, and the influence of the combination of conditional variables needs to be further investigated.

### 4.2 Configuration analysis

The result of concise solution and intermediate solution is obtained through Boolean operation, the condition combination of concise solution is used as the core condition, and auxiliary conditions are listed based on the intermediate solution. Table 4 shows the configuration analysis results.

With regard to persistent popularization, several key mode combinations for the long-duration spread of buzzwords can be analyzed through configuration analysis. It can be divided into channels for

public figures, channels for ordinary people, channels for authoritative forwarding, appeals in entertainment events, and exogenous buzzword.

Table 4 Persistent propagation configuration

configuration	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8
CRE	⊗		●			●	⊗	
PLAT			●	⊗	●	●		●
AUTH			⊗	⊗	●	●	●	●
SRC			●		●	●		●
EVE		●	●		⊗	●	●	●
EMO			●	⊗	●	⊗	●	●
APE	●	⊗		●	●			●
STY		●	●			●	●	
REC	⊗				⊗	●		⊗
WORD			●		●	●		⊗
consistency	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Original coverage	0.13	0.2	0.33	0.13	0.07	0.07	0.13	0.07
Unique coverage	0.07	0.13	0.27	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.13	0.07
Total consistency					1			
Total coverage					1			

(1) The public figure channel consists of three configurations, namely, variable form buzzwords derived from public figures (C1), and genotype buzzwords created by public figures in entertainment events and forwarded by authority (C7). In configuration C1, the core condition is creation of public figures and variable forms. In Configuration C7, the core conditions are originated from entertainment events, creation of public figures, authoritative forwarding, joking emotions, and genotype. From the model analysis, it can be seen that for buzzwords originating from public figures to be popular for a long time, variable form is an important condition. Netizens can use this buzzword to express specific attitudes. A typical example of this mode of interpretation is "China on the Tip of the Tongue", a food program from CCTV in 2012. Due to its sophisticated production and novel themes, it became a hot topic on the Internet after it was broadcast, and its program name also became famous and was later cited by netizens and created a new sentence pattern "XX on the tip of the tongue" which became a buzzword with variable forms. Due to the popularity and repetition of this program, the buzzword has continued to be popular for a long time.

(2) Ordinary people's channels include word buzzwords from ordinary people that have not been forwarded by authority(C3), and non-ridiculous word buzzwords created by ordinary people in entertainment events(C6). In configuration C3, the core conditions are ordinary people, unauthorized forwarding, word buzzwords, and auxiliary conditions are self-media, personality creation, originating from hot events, ridicule emotions, and genotype. In configuration C6, the core conditions are ordinary people, non-ridicule, and popular words. Auxiliary conditions are first published on self-media platforms, authoritative forwarding, personality creation, generated from entertainment events, genotype and variable form. From the perspective of model analysis, if buzzwords originating from ordinary people want to be popular for a long time, relying on entertainment events or hot events and then creating through the self-media is a more effective way. Raise attention with the help of the popularity of entertainment hotspot events, which is the popular method of "rubbing hotspots" on the Internet. A typical example is "Gao Fu Shuai". This buzzword is a word created by ordinary people. Because it reflects a certain phenomenon and carries a certain mood of ridicule and self-deprecation, it is not forwarded, followed or used by authoritative media after it is produced. But it is still popular and gradually become a common word.

(3) Authoritative forwarding channels include word buzzwords with variable forms in non-entertainment events(C5), and phrase buzzwords with variable forms of personality creation in

entertainment events (C8). The core conditions for configuring C5 are non-entertainment events, variable forms, and buzzwords. Auxiliary conditions are starting from the media platform, authoritative forwarding, personality creation, and ridicule emotions. The core conditions for configuring C8 are authoritative forwarding, personality creation, generated from entertainment events, variable forms, and phrase buzzwords. Auxiliary conditions are first published on the self-media platform and ridiculed. From the perspective of model analysis, buzzwords that want to be popular for a long time mainly come from the personality creation of public figures or netizens in entertainment events. They are first published in the self-media, and spread for a longer time after being forwarded by an authority. A typical example is "Buddha", which is extended to "Buddha youth", "Buddha life" and so on. After its emergence, it was also used by mainstream media to ridicule a certain kind of plain attitude, so it gradually became popular common terms.

(4) The genotype buzzword mode with appeal refers to buzzwords with appeal generated in entertainment events (C2). The core condition of configuration C2 is to produce entertainment events, have appeals, and assist conditional genotypes. A typical example is "My heart is almost broken", which comes from a sentence spoken by a participant in a TV variety show, which was later used by the Internet public to express a certain emotion that was hit. The high attention of entertainment events and the ability to carry appeals make the buzzwords of this model continue to spread.

(5) Exogenous buzzwords, whose model is non-ridiculous and non-appealing buzzwords that are not first published in the media and have not been forwarded by authority (C4). In configuration C4, the core conditions are non-self-media, non-authoritative forwarding, no ridicule emotions, and no appeal is an auxiliary condition. Most of the buzzwords of this kind are spread from television media, websites, magazines, etc. Due to its obvious characteristics or high frequency of occurrence, the term can circulate on the Internet for a long time. A typical example of this model interpretation is the "supply side", which originated from the official media, as a term related to national policies, and therefore appeared in the eyes of the Internet public for a long time.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

This article collects 45 buzzwords that appeared on the Internet from 2008 to 2011, uses a clear set of qualitative comparative analysis methods, and starts from the channels, events, and structural characteristics of the Internet buzzwords, including ten variables such as creators, first release platforms, authoritative forwarding, source, event type, emotional expression, appeal, expression type, form change, and expression form, etc. to interactively explore the influence mechanism of the persistent spread mode of internet buzzwords. Through research, we found that there are 8 effective paths for long-term continuous dissemination, which can be summarized as public figures, ordinary people, and authoritative forwarding channel modes. For the continuous communication model, the variable form of buzzwords created by public figures can be borrowed by other online users for deduction, which enhances the vitality of buzzwords. Ordinary people need to rely on entertainment events or hot events to create. Similarly in this process, buzzwords which are first published in the self-media will last longer after being forwarded by an authority. According to these transmission modes, it is possible to use some key conditions to achieve corresponding transmission requirements, or to limit and weaken certain conditions in the corresponding links to reduce the heat or durability of transmission. It provides a useful reference for the spread of Internet buzzwords and management practices.

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