

# Research on the Combination Path of Influencing Factors on the Dissemination Effect of Gossip News on “Marriage Change” Issues: Focusing on Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Kejia Wang

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

1155181214@link.cuhk.edu.hk

**Abstract.** Objective Gossip news is a popular news product specially designed for gossip fans and suitable for mass communication. Under the background of news marketization, the social influence of gossip news has increased dramatically, and the relevant research is urgent. “Marriage change” is a topic of great concern to the audience in gossip news, so it is necessary to understand the combination path of the main influencing factors affecting its dissemination. Results This paper builds an analysis framework of “content communication” concerning the qualitative comparative analysis method. In the five years from 2018 to 2022, 10 gossip news on “marriage change” topics with strong communication effects were selected as research cases. The qualitative comparative analysis method (QCA) was adopted to analyze the research samples, and the combination of conditions of high communication effect was obtained. Conclusion From the two dimensions of social construction attribute and media construction attribute, this study reveals the combination of conditions that affect the communication effect of gossip news on the topic of “marriage change”, including perceptual and rational combination paths.

**Keywords:** Gossip News; Marriage Change; Communication Effect; Influencing Factors; QCA.

## 1. Problem Presentation: The Combination Path of Influencing Factors on the Dissemination Effect of Gossip News

### 1.1 Literature Review

Gossip is generally considered to be a popular slang term in Hong Kong society. In the *Hong Kong Dialect Dictionary*, behaviors such as “prying into privacy”, “talking about right and wrong”, and “being nosy” are all considered “gossip” (Gossip has the meaning of wandering between “news and entertainment” and between “formal talk and small talk”) [1]. Gossip can be regarded as a universal anthropological phenomenon, and gossip journalism is a kind of popular news product designed for gossip lovers and suitable for mass communication, including “common gossip” and “celebrity gossip” [2]. Among them, the mass media mainly focus on celebrity gossip, that is, the anecdotes of public figures. The development of gossip news is intertwined with political, economic, cultural, audience and technological factors. The rise of market economy after reform and opening up, the spread of popular culture and the curiosity of audience’s voyeurism have provided a hotbed for the development of gossip journalism [3].

The gossip journalism has long been interested in the topic of “marriages” of public figures. As a sociological term, “marriage change” is short for change in marital relationship, mainly including divorce, remarriage, etc. The “marriage change” category continues to receive mass media attention due to its complex drama and the popularity of the parties involved, such as the “Fengzhi marriage change” (The divorce of a Hong Kong artist couple, Nicholas Tse and Cecilia Cheung) (A study conducted an experiment in which the “Fengzhi marriage upheaval” was used as the main news stimulus, along with other distracting news, for 243 volunteers (120 males and 123 females) aged 18 and older. The experiment found that “when the news mapped out a generic frame that was more in line with social expectations (e.g., a wife should never cheat on her husband, etc.), the audience was more inclined to recall the implication of the specific issue frame (e.g., expressing dissatisfaction with

Cecilia Cheung and sympathy for Nicholas Tse, etc.)” [4]. As a typical gossip journalism stimulant, it became the focus of public opinion in the media and anecdotal gossip news from May to August 2011.

The factors that influence the spread of gossip news like “marriage change” are complex, and the research on them is limited in China. Domestic scholars’ research on the factors influencing the effect of news communication is mainly based on Laswell’s 5W theory and the concept of “media salience” proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw to investigate the factors influencing the communication effect of news [5]. Based on this, this paper will use QCA model to refine the combination of impact factor paths for the communication effects of gossip news on “marriage change” from the perspectives of report target, report content and report source. As an important concept in the field of social science research, impact factor plays an important role in evaluating research objects and subdividing research fields, and quantitative indicators such as mean value of variable, standard deviation and ranking of variables are more involved in the estimation of impact factor. The framework based on quantitative research is more applicable in studies answering the paths of influencing factor combinations. For example, studies on the topics of “news reversal” and “audience misbelief” found in a qualitative comparative analysis of the “paths of the combination of factors that influence reversal news” that the four factors of media constructs do not influence reversal news.

This paper relies on the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method as a landmark, as mentioned in the monograph *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* published by Ragin (1987), QCA is an ensemble analysis method that follows two basic strategies for determining whether the conditions or combinations of conditions assessed constitute “sufficient” or “necessary” conditions for an outcome by theoretically conceptualizing the causal conditions and outcomes of the study as an ensemble [6]. The QCA approach is common in some studies of Internet use and new media platforms. For example, one study systematically compared 15 cases of collective protests by property owners through qualitative comparative analysis and concluded that the Internet has great potential to mobilize the masses [7]. In this regard, the QCA method is not only a research method with both quantitative and qualitative orientations, but can also help researchers to quickly clarify complex correlations and promote methodological innovation in journalism and communication.

## 1.2 Deficiencies of Existing Studies

Although academic studies have focused on the characteristics of “gossip news”, there are still some shortcomings.

Focus more on the reason analysis but less on the cause: These studies discuss the connotation of “gossip news” and analyze the causes with historical and social science research methods, but less on the consequences of the phenomenon with case studies.

Focus more on case analysis and less on systematic research: There is a lack of systematic research on the combination of factors and paths of gossip news, starting only with cases such as “Fengzhi marriage change”, and not from a meso and macro perspective to reveal the social significance of “gossip news”, and less on the social impact of “gossip news”.

Focus more on qualitative research and less on data modeling: In contrast to the studies that have focused more on the origin or function of gossip news and conducted qualitative analysis in conjunction with texts, fewer studies have conducted qualitative comparative analysis of gossip news in conjunction with data analysis models, which also affects their scientific validity.

To sum up, this essay intends to study the issue of “marriage change” in the gossip news, focusing on the combination path of the influence factors of communication effect, and conduct an in-depth study based on qualitative comparative analysis.

## 1.3 Research Questions

Therefore, this essay intends to address the following questions.

RQ1: What impact factors are needed to evaluate the communication effect of the “marriage change” issue in gossip news?

RQ2: What is the path of the combination of factors influencing the communication effect of “marriage change” in gossip news?

RQ3: What are the specific effects of the different influencing factors on the “marriage change” issue in gossip news?

## 2. Research Design and Analytical Model

### 2.1 Research Case Selection

The definition and boundaries of “gossip news” are relatively fixed, and the object of this study is to focus on celebrity gossip and research on the topic of “marriage change”. In terms of the criteria for selecting cases, this essay mainly collects social news related to celebrities' “marriage change” (divorce, remarriage, etc.) based on the aforementioned criteria, and decomposes and analyzes the news content with the help of Lasswell's 5W theory, so as to compile the “gossip news” cases related to “marriage change”. In terms of sample selection, this essay uses the period from 2018 to 2022 as a limited interval and selects a total of 10 gossip news items involving the topic of “marriage change” as the research sample. In terms of research method, this paper introduces qualitative comparative analysis to help further clarify the combination of factors influencing the effect of gossip news, and to innovate in the way of explanation (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Cases of “Gossip News”, 2018-2022

No.	News Event	New Content	Children	Parties	Dissemination
01	Wang Xiaofei and Xu Xiyuan's divorce	On November 22, 2021 Xu Xiyuan and Wang Xiaofei released their divorce statement. On November 22, 2021 Xu Xiyuan and Wang Xiaofei released their divorce statement. On March 8, 2022, South Korean singer DJ Koo announced his marriage to Xu Xiyuan. On May 30 the Taiwanese media revealed that Wang Xiaofei had cheated on several women within his marriage with Xu Xiyuan. After that, Wang Xiaofei posted an article detailing the divorce timeline, but was severely refuted by Xu Xiyuan's mother. The divorce drama has only been put to rest so far.	A son and a daughter	Wang Xiaofei, Xu Xiyuan, their mothers	It was spread on Tik Tok, Weibo and other platforms. On Weibo, Wang Xiaofei had 6,557,000 followers. Xu Xiyuan had 41,421,000 followers.
02	Huang Xiaoming and Yang Ying's divorce	On January 28, 2022, Huang Xiaoming and Angelababy (Yang Ying) officially announced their divorce, with both parties releasing a statement saying that after serious consideration, they have decided to end their marriage and separate peacefully, and would raise their children together in the future. Since the news of their divorce had been rumored for a long time, it did not cause too much hot discussion.	A son	Angelababy (Yang Ying), Huang Xiaoming	It was mainly spread on Weibo where Yang Ying had 104,000,000 followers and Huang Xiaoming had 61,077,000 followers.
03	Feng Shaofeng and Zhao Liying's divorce	On April 23, 2021, Zhao Liying's and Feng Shaofeng's studios released a statement to officially announce the news of their divorce. After the divorce statement was released, both Zhao Liying and Feng Shaofeng kept a very low profile and did not generate other related marriage change rumors.	A son	Zhao Liying, Feng Shaofeng	It was mainly spread on Weibo, where Zhao Liying had 90,097,000 followers and Feng Shaofeng had 25,603,000 followers.

04	Li Xiang and Wang Yuelun's divorce	In the early hours of November 30, 2021, director Wang Yuelun suddenly announced on his social media platform that he had divorced Christina Li in July. Before his divorce was officially announced, he was photographed by the gossip media meeting two women in three days, followed by Li Xiang expressing her attitude on the microblogging platform with a highly suggestive plate of greens. After the divorce, Li Xiang was repeatedly photographed out of the hotel with a younger man, and the discussion about whether or not anyone on both sides was cheating was raging on various platforms.	A daughter	Li Xiang, Wang Yuelun	It was spread on platforms such as Tik Tok and Weibo. On Weibo, Li Xiang had 245,717,000 followers and Wang Yuelun had 8,217,000 followers.
05	Wu Qian and Zhang Yujian's divorce	On March 15, 2021, Zhang Yujian posted an article admitting that he was secretly married to Wu Qian and had a daughter. On February 14, 2022, Wu Qian announced her divorce from Zhang Yujian by posting a photo with her daughter on her microblogging platform and captioning it: "Valentine's Day date for single girls". The two were divorced less than a year apart from the announcement of their marriage, which made many netizens feel lamentable.	A daughter	Wu Qian, Zhang Yujian	It was spread on Weibo and other platforms. On Weibo, Wu Qian had 13,241,000 followers and Zhang Yu Jian has 6,729,000 followers.
06	Wang Lihong and Li Jinglei's divorce	On December 15, 2021, Wang Lihong announced his peaceful breakup with Li Jinglei. December 16, Wang Lihong was exposed to cheat on By2 sister Sun Yu, by2 studio and Wang Lihong's agent spoke out to disprove the rumors. December 17, Li Jinglei first spoke out to accuse Wang Lihong of cheating and other acts. In the early hours of December 19, Wang Lihong's father released a handwritten letter denying his son's cheating. On December 19, Wang Lihong responded with an article saying that he had not been unfaithful to his marriage and accused Li Jinglei of demanding a high amount of alimony. On December 20, Li Jinglei sent out a third article pointing out that Wang Lihong had bad intentions and was a despicable person. On December 23, Li Jinglei sent another long article hoping to end the fiasco, after 7 days of this drama of hammering people officially ended.	Two daughters and a son	Wang Lihong, Li Jinglei, Sun Yu (from by2), Fan Weiqi and other female stars, Wang Lihong's father.	It was spread on Weibo and other platforms. On Weibo, Wang Lihong had 67,665,000 followers and Li Jinglei had 4,313,000 followers.
07	Fukuhara Ai and Jiang Hongjie's divorce	On March 3, 2021, Japanese media revealed that Ai Fukuhara was suspected to be dating a man. After this incident, Ai Fukuhara and Hongjie Jiang's marriage change was put on the table. On March 21, 2021, Ai Fukuhara officially filed for divorce, after which Jiang Hongjie also filed divorce proceedings. In the process of the two for divorce things, the Japanese media revealed that Ai Fukuhara had suffered from verbal bullying by Jiang Hongjie within the	A son and a daughter	Fukuhara Ai, Jiang Hongjie	It was spread on Weibo and other platforms. On Weibo, Fukuhara Ai had 5,613,000 followers and Jiang Hongjie had 1,604,000 followers.

		marriage, causing discussion among netizens. On July 8, 2021, Jiang Hongjie and Ai Fukuhara released a statement together, announcing that the two had divorced.			
08	Li Dan and Chen Dian's divorce	On August 21, 2021, a netizen exposed Li Dan's post in his Wechat Moments, which seemed to announce his divorce. After this reveal, entertainment interviewed Li Dan's staff, the other party confirmed the divorce news of Li Dan and Chen Dian. After this, the news of Li Dan and Chen Dian's marriage chance was once a hot topic on Weibo, but the two parties have not responded positively to the news.	None	Li Dan, netizen, Li Dan's staff	It was spread on Weibo and other platforms. On Weibo, Li Dan had 8,820,000 followers and Chen Dian had 1,883,000 followers.
09	Choo Ja Hyun and Yu Xiaoguang's marriage change rumors	On July 15, 2021, a woman was photographed by the media sitting on Yu Xiaoguang's lap after a party with his friends, suspected of cheating on him within his marriage. After this news came to light, Choo Ja Hyun traveled to South Korea alone, and Choo Ja Hyun's photos on social media platforms were also found by netizens not wearing a wedding ring, and the two were suspected to have a marriage change. The divorce controversy of this exotic marriage from the "cheating incident" began to last nearly half a year. Until the two posted a photo together, the incident was settled.	A son	Choo Ja Hyun, Yu Xiaoguang	It was spread on Weibo and other platforms. On Weibo, Yu Xiaoguang had 9,298,000 followers and Choo Ja Hyun had 10,146,000 followers.
10	Li Xiaolu and Jia Nailiang's divorce	In early 2018, Li Xiaolu was caught in the "sleepover incident". Subsequently, netizens posted Li Xiaolu and PG one's intimate video and evidence of Li Xiaolu's secret show of affection with PG one within the marriage. On November 14, 2019, Jia Nailiang and Li Xiaolu studio released a joint statement, officially announcing that the two sides have divorced. After the divorce statement was released, Li Xiaolu issued a long article accusing herself of being victimized, but netizens questioned her remarks. After this, the divorce drama gradually subsided.	A daughter	Li Xiaolu, Jia Nailiang, PG one	It was spread on Weibo and other platforms. On Weibo, Li Xiaolu had 43,934,000 followers and Jia Nailiang had 63,999,000 followers.

## 2.2 Analytical Model Selection

Gossip news has a wide influence in the field of mass communication because of its dramatic narrative content, so determining the combination of factors that influence the path of gossip news dissemination has a certain positive effect on guiding public opinion. It has been found that there are certain common factors affecting the news dissemination process, which can be summarized and organized to provide reliable explanatory variables and outcome variables for relevant studies, so as to scientifically assess the news dissemination effect. Therefore, one of the objectives of this essay is to find the common regression coefficient / confidence factor in the factors that drive the sustained dissemination of gossip news, and the combination path of the factors that drive the sustained dissemination of gossip news – that is, the conditional configuration of the factors that influence the effects such as the sustainability of the dissemination.

### 2.3 Selection of Explanatory Variables

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is a research method that is oriented to small and medium-sized case studies. As a new perspective on social science research objects, QCA has been applied in the field of communication to the study of event-oriented online events and collective action, organizational communication of social relations such as government enterprises, and comparative analysis of transnational news [8]. Studies have shown that the dissemination of news in social media is affected by social factors and the medium itself in terms of the motivation of content generation and user incentives. For example, Liu Guoqiang and Su Huiqin (2021) [9] conducted a qualitative comparative analysis of the combination of factors influencing the occurrence of reversal news on the theme of “reversal news”, which has influenced this study with its important inspiration in terms of research methodology. Tian (2012) [10] combines communication science issues with information science theories to summarize two aspects that influence news and information dissemination trends (Weibo platform: event attention, event emotional polarity trends, etc.). Zhao Yuxiang (2011) constructed a “motivational model” for UGC incentive design and revealed the motivational factors of user behavior from social, technological, and individual driving dimensions. It is pointed out that factors such as common perceptions generated by social identity, interest and fun, and self-efficacy enhancement can positively motivate users’ behavior in social platforms [11]. Based on the existing studies, this essay attempts to break down the explanatory variables influencing the dissemination of gossip news “marriage change” from two perspectives: “socially constructed attributes” and “media constructed attributes”. In the setting and assignment of variables, reference is made to the “Table of coding descriptions and specific assignment of variables” compiled by Liu Guoqiang and Su Huiqin.

i. Socially constructed attributes: “the tendency to trust the social factors involved in news events”. Chang Jiang points out that digital journalism, as a new paradigm of journalism research, is a new paradigm. The construction of its “communication system” is related to news value, the “media ecology” in which news is located, and the “emotional network” of news [12]. Therefore, the spread of the gossip news “marriage change” category is linked to the properties of the media platform on which it is spread, the complexity of the emotional value behind the news, and the value core embodied in the news itself. Collins argues that people are more influenced by “conventions” and that groups tend to accept views that improve their “status and interests”. The type of emotion, the participants, and the call of the subject of “marriage” gossip are closely related to social psychological and cultural constructs.

Emotion type. Compared with conventional news, gossip news has a more dramatic set of narrative logic and pays more attention to the role of dramatic emotional elements in the advancement of news events. An analysis of 10 “marriage change” gossip stories shows that these events often contain a variety of emotions, including infidelity, blaming the ex, and so on. Scholar James Jasper argues that emotion, as a “hot cognition”, has a huge impact on how people behave. It can be seen that the type of emotion contained in the news has a certain influence on the audience’s dissemination of gossip news about “marriage change” issues. In this study, the complexity of emotion type is included as an explanatory variable for the spread of gossip news about “marriage change” issues. A value of 1 is assigned to gossip news on marriage issues that contain two or more emotional factors, while a value of 0 is assigned to gossip news on marriage issues that contain only one emotional factor.

Character model. According to this essay’s research on 10 gossip news items on the topic of “marriage change”, the news items with a wide distribution range generally involve more people involved in the news, and the complex relationship between the people adds many gimmicks to the discussion of the topic of marriage change, making it more dramatic and controversial, and thus causing widespread discussion. As He Man and Bai Shuliang point out, the drama of the news as an emotional tool to engage the audience is an excellent way to show the conflict of the characters and trigger the desire of the audience to widely disseminate the news and analyze it [13]. Therefore, this essay sets the participants as the explanatory variables affecting the spread of gossip news about marriage. A value of 1 is assigned to gossip news that involves other people besides the man and

woman in the marriage, and a value of 0 is assigned to gossip news that involves only the man and woman in the marriage.

Subject summon. Celebrity marriage changes have a natural attraction to the audience, which can be attributed to the heat of the celebrity itself and the “voyeuristic” mentality of the audience. At the same time, such a phenomenon is just like the “summoning” theory proposed by Althusser, in which celebrities transform themselves into ideological subjects by means of “summoning” [14]. When celebrities post news about their marriages on social media platforms, audiences are “summoned” to respond and spread the news about their marriage changes. At the same time, the self-exposure of the celebrity’s marriage change information not only has a “summoning” effect on the audience, but also enhances the credibility of the news, making them more willing to explore the news related to the marriage change. Therefore, this essay takes the subject’s summoning as one of the explanatory variables for the spread of the gossip news “marriage change” category, and assigns a value of 1 to news in which the fact of the marriage change is revealed by the person involved in the marriage change and 0 to news in which the fact of the marriage change is revealed by someone other than the person involved in the marriage change.

ii. Mediated constructive properties: In 1922, Lippmann proposed the term “mimetic environment” in his book “Public Opinion”, and thus the idea of “media construction” was confirmed and popularized by the academic community. As a constructivist view of media, media construction basically agrees with the theoretical concept that “symbolic reality” is the “highest reality”, which is logically different from the view of media tools and has a global universal value. Jiang Gen (2012) [15] summarizes the acceptance and dissemination of media constructs in China and argues that this epistemology is closely related to constructive realism and has influenced “knowledge gap theory”, “agenda setting theory”, “connotation theory”, and “symbolic interaction theory”. These media construction theories have influenced today’s journalism and communication research. Therefore, this study classifies the variables based on the “text production” factors involved in the gossip news genre.

Text form. Text news and image news (image + video) are the two most common forms of news text. In a neat arrangement of text, audiences reading text news tend to immerse themselves in the framework of the news text, thus creating a high level of trust in the news. For image texts, pictures and videos can break the limitation of time and space and make audiences feel like they are there, and media will consciously use eye-catching pictures or videos to stimulate audiences’ senses and make them more interested in the news content and its extension. Based on the different characteristics of the text form of news, this essay intends to set the text form as the explanatory variable, and assign the value of 1 to the text-based “marriage change” gossip news, and 0 to the image-based “marriage change” gossip news.

Deep agenda. The three levels of issue setting are “surface reality and medium anxiety and deep themes”, among which the deep themes are most likely to inspire personal missions and responsibilities. In the process of this study, we found that the gossip news of “marriage change” category with strong communication effect often involves sensitive issues of social concern, such as marriage fidelity and women’s power issues. These are the most controversial issues on the Internet, so they can easily trigger the audience’s interest in communication. Based on this, this essay assigns a value of 1 to “marriage change” gossip news, which involves socially sensitive issues, and a value of 0 to other issues except marriage change.

Word emotion. The principle of objectivity in journalism requires journalists to follow the principle of objectivity when reporting news, both in terms of content and form. The content emphasizes the reporting of objective objects, while the form emphasizes that journalists themselves report news without bias. After analyzing 10 gossip stories on the topic of “marriage change”, we find that some of the stories were exaggerated, using emotional words and leading the audience to speculate on the details of the celebrity’s marriage change, which make the news more effective. The majority of gossip stories on the topic of “marriage” were found to use associative terms and were

therefore assigned a value of 1. A few stories reported on celebrity marriages from a factual and neutral standpoint and were therefore assigned a value of 0.

## 2.4 Selection of Outcome Variables

This study takes the gossip news “marriage change” issue as the research object, focuses on the socially constructed attributes and media constructed attributes structurally, measures the effect intension of the gossip news “marriage change” issue in terms of the length of time on Sina Weibo hot search, and considers it as a structural variable to assign a value to the research case in conjunction with the consideration of Weibo heat (The heat value of a popular microblog is calculated by a set of formulas that combine the spreading power of users who retweeted the microblog, the total number of retweets, the information content of the microblog, and the time of posting the microblog. Some studies have used the LDA model to estimate the heat of microblogs, and the formula for calculating heat is generally based on the “number of comments” and “number of reposts”) [16]. Among the gossip news, the influence of the “marriage change” category is large, and the influence path is special, and the core feature of its content narrative is drama. In this paper, we use Sina Weibo as the main platform for data collection, and sort out the length of time that “10 cases of ‘marriage change’ gossip news” are on the list and the popularity of Weibo.

**Table 2.** Time on the List and Weibo heat of “Marriage Change” Gossip News

Topic	Time on the List	Result Variable Assignment	Reference Item / Sina Weibo Heat*
Wang Xiaofei and Xu Xiyuan’s divorce statement	95	0	15705567
Zhao Liying and Feng Shaofeng divorced	132	0	43906172
Wang Yuelun deleted blog after announcing that his divorce with Li Xiang	126	0	548364
Li Dan and Chen Dian divorced	502	1	30133805
Yu Xiaoguang denies cheating	539	1	5672467
Huang Xiaoming and Angelababy divorced	600	1	63384548
Wu Qian and Zhang Yujian divorced	819	1	6001225
Wang Lihong and Li Jinglei officially divorced	927	1	2059941
Hongjie Jiang petitioned the court to divorce Fukuhara Ai	449	0	1770158
Jia Nailiang and Li Xiaolu divorced	546	1	58520

\*Note: The Sina Weibo heat quoted here is derived from the Sina Weibo platform based on the heat calculation formula and has some reference value.

Therefore, the effect intension, as the outcome variable of this study, is mainly related to the length of time on the list. This essay assigns a value of 0 to “marriage change” gossip news with less than 500 minutes on the list, and a value of 1 to those with more than 500 minutes and less than 1000 minutes. Among the 10 “marriage change” gossip stories, the ratio of low-impact to high-impact cases is 2:3, with 40% of low-impact cases and 60% of high-impact cases.

## 2.5 Variable Setting and Assignment

Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is suitable for small and medium-sized data samples. In this study, the results of the qualitative comparative analysis by Sui Yan and Tan He are referred to [17], the data weights of each indicator constructed by Liu Guoqiang and Su Huiqin are compared (based on the comprehensive analysis of Boolean logic operation), and the explanatory variables and outcome variables that affect the gossip news of the “marriage change” category are shown in the following table.



**Table 3.** Coding Description and Assignment of Explanatory and Outcome Variables

Description	Variable		Variable Type	Coding Description	Data Weight	Assignment	
Explanatory variables	Social construct properties	Emotional type	Mixed emotions	News events involve complex emotions such as the person’s infidelity to the marriage and accusations against the ex.	0.6	1	
			Single emotion	Only one emotional element is involved in the news event.	0.4	0	
		People involved	Multiple core people	Other people are involved in the core group other than the marriage change parties.	0.6	1	
			No multiple core people	No other people are involved in the core group other than the marriage change parties.	0.4	0	
		Subject summoning	With subject summoning	News events are explained by the parties involved in the marriage change themselves.	0.8	1	
			No subject summoning	News events are explained by the others beside the parties involved in the marriage change.	0.2	0	
	Media construct properties	Text form	Text	The main communication vehicle for news events relies on text.	0.4	1	
			Image	The main communication vehicle for news events relies on photos and videos.	0.6	0	
		Deeper issues	Deeper issues involved	News events involve socially sensitive issues such as “female rights” and “domestic violence”.	0.6	1	
			Deeper issues not involved	News events involve only marriage change.	0.4	0	
		Attitude of wording	Inducive	News event reports use “associative” vocabulary.	0.7	1	
			Neutral	News event reports use neutral vocabulary.	0.3	0	
	Outcome variables	Effect intension		High impact	The length of news topics in Weibo hot list is longer than 500 minutes and shorter than 1000 minutes.	0.6	1
				Low impact	The length of news topics in Weibo hot list is shorter than 500 minutes.	0.4	0

**2.6 Truth Table Construction**

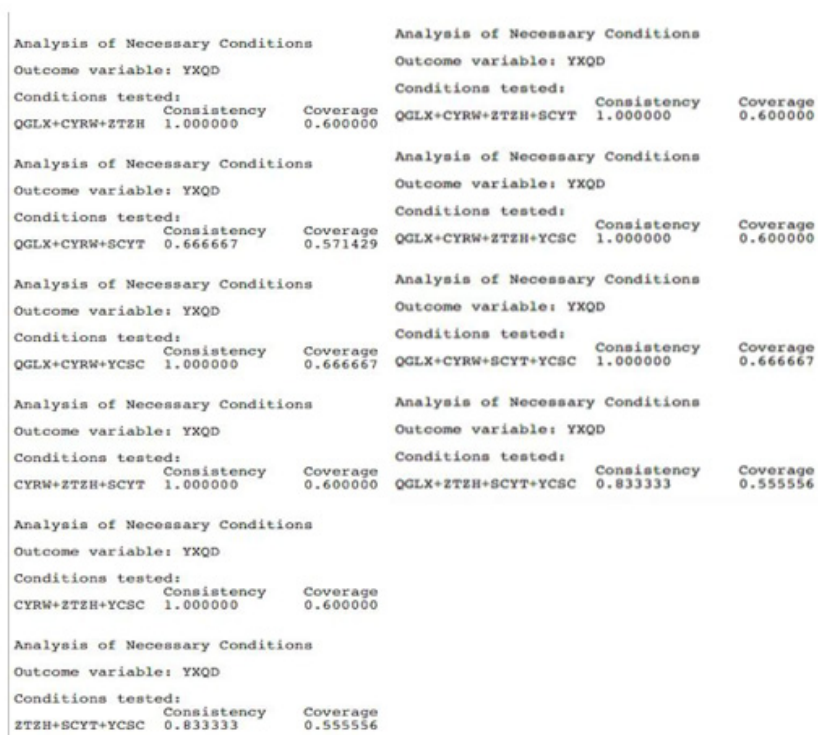
Accordingly, this study summarized the 0/1 values of the aforementioned “marriage change” gossip cases based on the “dichotomous attribution principle” in accordance with the coding instructions and the condition variables and outcome variables included in each sample. Finally, the following table of truth values of the variables is summarized.

**Table 4.** Case Variables Truth Table

Event No.	Emotional Type	People involved	Subject summoning	Text form	Deeper issues	Attitude of wording	Effect intension
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
3	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
4	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
5	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
6	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
7	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
8	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
9	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

### 3. Research Results: Key Findings from Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Because of the special characteristics of the spread of “marriage change” gossip and its related influencing factors, this essay analyzes the collated “marriage change” gossip cases by referring to Larkin’s “User’s Manual for Fuzzy Set/Qualitative Comparative Analysis”. In this essay, all the data are input into fs/QCA3.0 (Mac) software for analysis, and the truth table construction and conditional combination analysis are performed in turn to obtain a conditional combination configuration with high explanatory power.



**Figure 1.** fsQCA Software’s Arithmetic Process for the Explanatory Variables

Eight paths are found to peak opinion on the outcome variable:

- Path 1: emotional type\*people involved\*subject summoning
- Path 2: emotional type\*people involved\*attitude of wording
- Path 3: people involved\*subject summoning\*deeper issues
- Path 4: people involved\*subject summoning\*attitude of wording
- Path 5: emotional type\*people involved\*subject summoning\*attitude of wording
- Path 6: emotional type\*people involved\*subject summoning\*deeper issues
- Path 7: emotion type\*people involved\*deeper issues\*attitude of wording

**Table 5.** List of the Main Paths to the Variable Opinion Peak

Combination Path	Consistency	Coverage
emotional type*people involved*subject summoning	1.00	0.60
emotional type*people involved*attitude of wording	1.00	0.67
people involved*subject summoning*deeper issues	1.00	0.60
people involved*subject summoning*attitude of wording	1.00	0.60
emotional type*people involved*subject summoning*attitude of wording	1.00	0.60
emotional type*people involved*subject summoning*deeper issues	1.00	0.60
emotion type*people involved*deeper issues*attitude of wording	1.00	0.67

Two of the combination paths with high coverage are:

Combination Path 2: emotional type\*people involved\*attitude of wording

Combination Path 7: emotion type\*people involved\*deeper issues\*attitude of wording

#### i. Combination Path 2: Perceptual Types of Emotion, Character and Discourse

Emotional type is the key element of “marriage change” gossip news, and audiences read the gossip news to satisfy their emotional demands and forward the related news content. Gossip news emphasizes dramatic narrative logic, and the issue of “divorce” and “remarriage” helps the news to identify the type of emotion. Emotional types are “hot perceptions” that interfere directly and explicitly with audience behavior. The number and complexity of the people involved also influence the spread of gossip on “marriage change” issues. The complexity of interpersonal communication directly affects the level of drama in the news content and triggers the audience’s desire to retweet and comment on the news. The objectivity of gossip news has long been controversial, and gossip news often uses exaggerated rhetoric in its content and stimulating vocabulary to lead audiences to make relevant emotions and associations.

#### ii. Combination Path 7: Rational Types of Content Involving Deeper Issues

The gossip news of “marriage change” category, which has certain appeal in terms of emotions, characters and words, only stimulates the audience as emotional content and gets their attention, while once it enters the level of rational analysis, the gossip news will generally have a strong communication effect when the content structure is “surface reality + medium anxiety + deep theme”. These “marriage change” gossip news are not limited to the personal lives of the people involved, but are small and rational, incorporating socially sensitive issues. These can trigger further discussion on the issues of “marriage” and “female”, and induce the audience to expand their interest in spreading the news.

## 4. Summary and Reflections

In the context of the continuous development of gossip news, emerging media are eager to gain public attention by publishing gossip news on “marriage change” issues, which can be converted into economic benefits, and the causes of gossip news on “marriage change” issues with strong communication effects have begun to show complex and diversified characteristics. In this paper, we analyzed 10 “marriage change” gossip stories and found that the “marriage change” gossip stories with strong communication effects are not only related to the emotional type of the news, the people involved and the subject summoning, but also closely related to the deeper issues and attitudes of wording. This study argues that in the complex online environment, the spread of “marriage change” gossip news is influenced by a variety of factors, presenting both emotional and rational content. This essay finds that the combination path of influencing factors such as the emotional type, the people involved and the attitudes of wording demonstrates that the triggering point for audiences to communicate news of this category is based on emotional awareness, but if these contents refer to deeper issues such as marriage and gender, having a certain rational judgment, they will also produce good communication effects.

## References

- [1] Yin Le, "Gossip Journalism: A Historical Perspective and Communication Analysis", *Journalism and Communication Research*, Vol. 4, 2011.
- [2] Yan Yan, Ren Yuheng, "From Gossip-to-Gossip News: Origins, Functions and Controversies", *Journalist*, No. 8, 2020.
- [3] Liang Fang, "Research on the Phenomenon of Gossip News", Master's Thesis, Central University for Nationalities, 2008.
- [4] Yang Guang, "The Influence of News Texts, News Frames and Personal Models on News Comprehension: The Example of the 'Fengzhi Marriage Change'", *Journalism University*, Vol. 2, 2014.
- [5] Liu Jianming and Xu Tian, "Index System and Index Weight of News Communication Effect Evaluation in the Context of New Media", *Journalism and Communication Review*, Vol. 4, 2018.
- [6] Du Yunzhou and Jia Liangding, "Group Perspective and Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA): a New Path for Management Research", *Management World*, Vol. 6, 2017.
- [7] Huang Ronggui and Gui Yong, "Internet and Collective Protest of Property Owners: A Study Based on Qualitative Comparative Analysis Method", *Sociological Research*, No. 5, 2009.
- [8] Mao Zhanwen, "Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Journalism Communication Research", *International Journalism*, No. 4, 2016.
- [9] Liu Guoqiang and Su Huiqin, "News Reversal: Social and Media Constructs of Audience Misbelief – A Qualitative and Comparative Analysis Based on the Combination Path of Reversal News Occurrence Factors", *Contemporary Communication*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2021.
- [10] Tian Ye, "On Trends Analysis and Prediction Based on Micro-blogging Platforms", PhD thesis, Wuhan University, 2012 edition.
- [11] Zhao Yuxiang, "Motivation and Incentive Design on User-Generated Content in Social Media", PhD thesis, Nanjing University, 2011 edition.
- [12] Chang Jiang, "Digital Journalism: Imagining and Constructing a Theoretical System", *Journalist*, No. 2, 2020.
- [13] He Man, Bai Shuliang, "A Brief Analysis on Effective Ways to Suffice Audiences in News Narrative", *Journalism*, No. 5, 2009.
- [14] Althusser, L., *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. Lenin and philosophy and other essays*, London, New Left Books, 1971, P173.
- [15] Jiang Genyuan, "Media Construction View: An Epistemology of Communication Distinguished from the Media Tool View", *Contemporary Communication*, Vol. 3, 2012.
- [16] Tang Xiaobo and Xiang Kun, "Hotspot Mining based on LDA Model and Microblog Heat", *Library and Information Work*, Vol. 5, 2014.
- [17] Sui Yan, Tan He, "Information Diffusion in the Context of Online Group Communication: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) of Sina Weibo Data", *Journalism University*, Vol. 5, 2020.