CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
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Understanding the Rise of Web 2.0 Sites: Beyond the Debate between “Mediarcide” and “Mediamorphosis”
理解Web2.0網站的崛起：超越新舊媒體的“互斥”與“共生”二學說

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Abstract

The debate on whether new media will threaten the survival of old one surges every time when a new type of media comes up. The two conflicting statements concerning this issue are usually labeled as “mediacide” and “mediamorphosis”.

In the current dissertation I propose a statement beyond the debate between the abovementioned two statements. I suggest that the strength of competition between old and new media changes with the unit of analysis. Therefore, both of “mediacide” and “mediamorphosis” could be correct, in the sense that they are actually describing observations on different scales.

I conduct three analyses to investigate the competition between two modes of information architectures, the Web 1.0 and 2.0. The three analyses are of different units (observation scales).

On the macroscopic level I trace the daily traffic of the top 1,001 sites during a period of two years. The results not only confirm the assumption of “zero-sum” attention, but also reveal the strong competition between two modes in terms of traffic. In particular, the traffic of Web 2.0 sites grows at the cost of the traffic of Web 1.0 sites.

On the mesoscopic level I analyze two daily clickstream networks composed of
the top 979 and 956 sites, respectively. These two networks are collected at two different time points during an interval of 16 months. By analyzing the flow structure of the two networks I find that Web 2.0 sites are more accessible than Web 1.0 sites in terms of user navigation, and that this difference between the two modes is smaller than their difference in terms of traffic.

Finally, on the microscopic level I investigate the growth of received views of 200 sources on Youtube. These sources are divided into institutional and individual ones, corresponding to Web 1.0 and 2.0 modes, respectively. By comparing the attractiveness between two modes of sources, I find that the competition between them at this level is even weaker. Specifically, there is no evidence that the mode of a source would affect its attractiveness.

Put the three analyses together, it is reasonable to conclude that the competition between Web 1.0 and 2.0 modes changes with the unit of analysis. I suggest that the introduction of the observation scale as a new dimension of study not only provides a solution to close the debate between “mediamorphosis” and “mediacide”, but also contributes to a grand, universal framework for media ecology, a field in which there is a lack of consensus despite its long history.