

Final Web Design Report

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I. Introduction

For many mainland students, Hong Kong is an ideal place to obtain a master's degree for its outstanding academic atmosphere, prosperous economy and diversified cultures. Among all the postgraduate programs available in Hong Kong, programs related to media enjoy good reputation and popularity among a large number of mainland applicants. But to get a dream offer is always not easy. With a hope to help applicants effectively find their dream programs among all the media-related programs available in Hong Kong and do better in their application, I designed a website aggregating application tips and detailed information of all the HK's media-related postgraduate programs. In this report, I will show the whole design thinking process of how I construct my website by applying the UX design approach to solve the problem I defined. What's more, the usability test results will also be presented and analyzed to get some implications for further improvement.

II. Problem Definition

i. Strategy

1. Site Objectives

The very first thing I worked with my web design is to define the site objectives. To specifically define the problem, I tried to recall my own application experience a year ago. As a fresh applicant, I spent a lot of time collecting and filtering description and application requirements of all the media-related programs from diversified platforms. Sometimes it was pretty time-consuming to find out certain information I need because of the complex design of some websites. Besides, I was not able to make an effective application plan at the very beginning due to a lack of experience. My interviews with several applicants showed that the problems I encountered were common among applicants. So, there will be two objectives of my website: to help applicants save time in information collection and to improve their efficiency in preparing for application materials. By scanning this website, applicants could gain the necessary information and guidance they need and then finish the application procedure by themselves.

2. User Needs

In this project, I target my website at mainland students who want to apply for a postgraduate program related to media. In order to find out the needs of my target users as much as possible, I interviewed three junior students from my undergraduate school who desired to obtain a master's degree in media studies by asking them the question "what information or services you will be looking for if you are going to apply for dream program?". And I also invited two of my classmates who have successfully obtained the dream offers by themselves to share their application journey. From their sharing, I mainly summarized the needs of my target users into three categories: 1) basic information of each program; 2) detailed tips of every application steps; 3) communication with other applicants, seniors and the admission committees. A user journey map was also sketched based on the interviews (see *Figure1*).

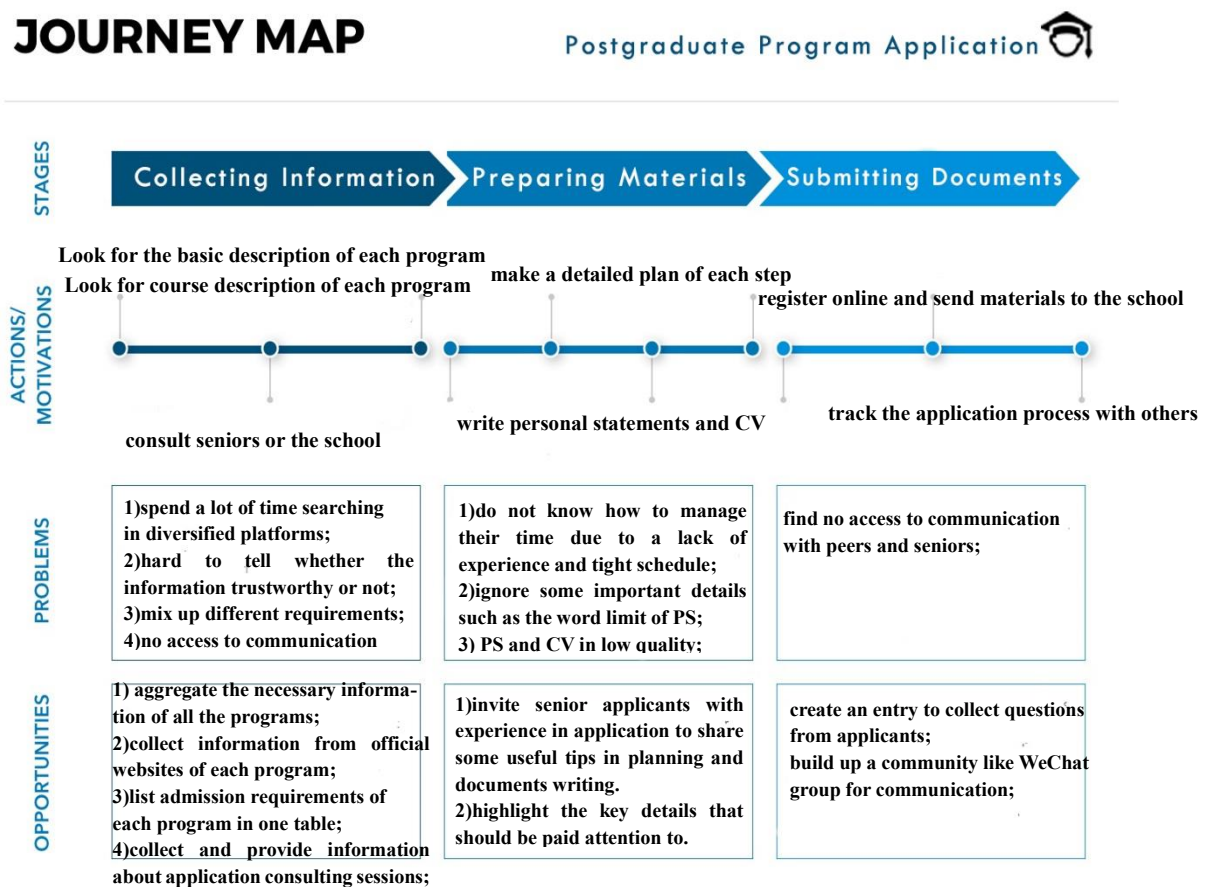


Figure1 User Journey Map

ii. Scope

By examining the user journey map of my target users, I defined the problems they will encounter throughout the whole application process and found some opportunities that I could help them solve the problems.

The following contents are considered to be included on my websites:

- 1) Basic introduction of 17 media-related postgraduate programs provided by five universities in Hong Kong including program description, normative study period, tuition fee, study resources and career perspective, which are most mentioned by my interviewees.
- 2) The detailed curriculum of each program to help applicants find out programs that fit their interest and future career planning;
- 3) Admission requirements of each program;
- 4) Tips shared by senior students on making an application plan and preparing application materials;
- 5) Information of some application information sessions including date and place.

To collect user's further questions and suggestions, a page with the function of receiving feedback should be included. Since I know little about the backend, the powerful Airtable form will be chosen to achieve my goal.

III. Problem Solution

i. Structure

After the problem and needs of my target users have been defined, I have a clear picture of what contents should be included on my website. But at present these contents are just pieces that should fit together to form a cohesive whole. To successfully guide my users to find what they want, a logical structure should be developed for my website.

Since all the contents of my website could be divided into several categories that fit in the needs of different application stages and under each category there will be some sub-categories, a hierarchical structure is adopted for the information architecture (see *Figure 2*):

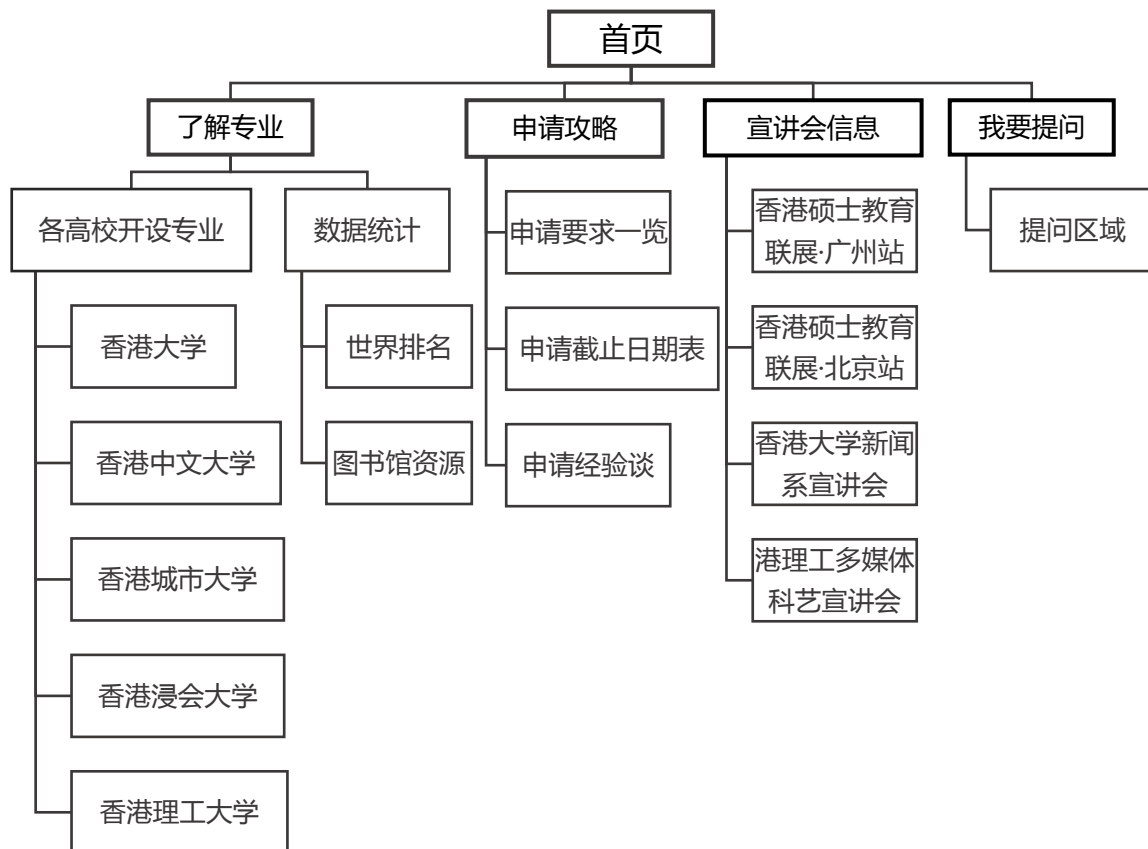


Figure2 Site Map

ii. Skeleton

After the information architecture was mapped out, I draw several low-fidelity prototypes of some key pages to validate the usability of my website design (see Figure3 -Figure7). In this stage, some of my friends were invited to visit my website and give me some feedback. In general, they thought the structure was clear and easy to use. By observing their behaviors, I got some useful implications to improve my web design. First of all, in the homepage, I found that most of them tried to click the titles of each section like “香港传媒专业介绍”, “申请攻略” and “宣讲会信息” to get into a new page (see Figure1). I did not expect this because I planned to provide clickable icons under the titles. One of my friends also mentioned that she expected to see some entries to new pages at the footer. In this way, she could directly click and enter a new page after she finished reading instead of scrolling up the page or returning to the previous page.

LOGO

首页

了解专业

申请攻略

宣讲会信息

我要提问

<

香港传媒申请知多少

了解香港传媒专业

了解更多

>

香港传媒专业介绍

申请攻略

宣讲会信息

>

>

>

>

香港传媒硕士申请指南

联系我

电话：XXX

地址：XXXX

Email:XXXX

@copyright

Figure3 Prototype – Homepage

LOGO	首页	了解专业	申请攻略	宣讲会信息	我要提问
------	----	------	------	-------	------

港校传媒专业介绍

香港大学 HKU

了解专业

香港大学

香港中文大学

香港城市大学

香港浸会大学

香港理工大学

世界排名

图书馆资源

新闻学硕士

> 专业课程设置

香港传媒专业介绍

联系我

电话：XXXX

地址：XXX

Email:XXXX

@copyright

Figure 4 Prototype – Introduction Page

LOGO

首页

了解专业

申请攻略

宣讲会信息

我要提问

DIY申请攻略

申请要求一览表

申请截止日期汇总

申请经验谈

规划

PS

CV

其他

香港传媒专业介绍

联系我

电话：XXXX

地址：XXX

Email:XXXX

@copyright

Figure5 Prototype – DIY tips page

LOGO

首页

了解专业

申请攻略

宣讲会信息

我要提问

宣讲会信息汇总

> 香港大学新闻系申请咨询会

> 香港多媒体科艺申请咨询会

> 香港教育硕士联展·北京站

> 香港教育硕士联展·广州站

香港传媒专业介绍

联系我

电话：XXXX

地址：XXX

Email:XXXX

@copyright

Figure6 Prototype – Information Session Page

LOGO	首页	了解专业	申请攻略	宣讲会信息	我要提问
------	----	------	------	-------	------

我要提问

称呼

联系方式

问题/意见

香港传媒专业介绍

联系我

电话：XXXX

地址：XXX

Email:XXXX

@copyright

Figure7 Prototype – Feedback Page

iii. Surface

After testing the usability of my website using wireframes, I collected all the feedbacks from the respondents and started to work on the visual design. By using bootstrap and some templates, I successfully created designs that met my primary expectation. On a whole, a simplified style was adopted because there were a large number of information included in my website. A complex design may bring my users obstacles to finding what they want.

I want to mention the design of some pages to show how I try to integrate the visual design with user needs. As it is mentioned in the skeleton part, some respondents tend to click the titles of each section in the homepage. So, I created clickable titles in the homepage to lead users to their destinations (see *Figure8*). Besides, a hover effect was applied to each button to guide users to click.



Figure8 Homepage-clickable title

Taking one of my respondents' suggestion, I created a recommendation area in the footer. Under the title "You may be interested in ..." there are six clickable pictures that will lead users to key pages of my website. I hope that they arouse the interest of my users to read more contents in my website so that they will stay in my website longer. (see *Figure9*).



Figure9 Footer

To communicate information to my target users more effectively, I present the contents and data in diversified forms. For example, I collected the admission requirements of all the media-related postgraduate programs and displayed them in one table for better comparison (see Figure10). A search bar was also provided so that users could search for what they were looking for directly.

香港传媒硕士DIY申请指南

首页 了解专业 申请攻略 宣讲会信息 我要提问

各专业申请要求一览

Show 10 entries

专业	语言成绩要求	是否有面试笔试	是否要求提交作品集	推荐信要求	个人陈述要求	是否要求寄送证明材料
城大传播与新媒体	雅思6.5/托福79/六级450	无	否	不强制要求	<1000字	否
城大创意媒体(文学硕士)	雅思6.5/托福79/六级500	无	否	不强制要求	<500字	否
城大创意媒体(艺术硕士)	雅思6.5/托福79/六级	无	是	不强制要求	<500字	否
城大整合传播营销	雅思6.5/托福79/六级450	无	否	不强制要求	<1000字	否
浸会传媒管理	雅思6.5/托福79	可能有面试	否	2封	500字	否
浸会传播学	雅思6.5/托福79	可能有面试	否	2封	500字	否
浸会国际新闻	雅思6.5/托福79	可能有面试	否	2封	500字	否
浸会影视与新媒体制片管理	雅思6.5/托福79	可能有面试	否	2封	500字	否
浸会电影电视与数码媒体	雅思6.5/托福79	面试	是	2封	500字	否
港中文企业传播	雅思6.5/托福79	无	否	2封/需列网申系统下载申请表	无特别要求	是

Showing 1 to 10 of 17 entries

Previous 1 2 Next

Figure 10 Table- admission requirements

The application deadline is very crucial to every applicant. In my website, I collected the application deadline of each program and showed them by the means of Airtable calendar (see Figure11). I hope that this calendar could help applicants keep track of their application procedure and perform better in time management.



(Figure11 Calendar-application deadline)

One more thing I want to mention regarding to the visual design is the data visualization. To help applicants find out their dream program, introduction and curriculum are not enough. The reputation and academic resources of universities are key elements that applicants will take into account when they are making decision. So, I collected the world ranking data of each university and some data relating to their academic resources. The world ranking data were visualized with line chart, which could show the development trend of each university. And the amount of academic resources of each university were presented with bar charts so that users could compare them directly (see Figure12).



Figure12 Data Visualization

Visual design is not only for aesthetics but also for communication. To communicate information to my users directly, I try to present the contents of my website by integrating the data visualization methods that I learnt this semester. I hope that they

can effectively help my users find what they want.

IV. Usability Test

To evaluate the design of my website, I invited five respondents to take part in my usability tests. Three of them lived in the mainland and the other two were in Hong Kong. Three respondents in the mainland help me record their test process with screen recording tools so that I can clearly see how they explore my website while the other two were directly observed by me.

Three tasks were designed for the participants to take on the test interface:

- 1) *Check the curriculum of PolyU's MET program.*
- 2) *Find out the world ranking of CUHK's communication and media studies subject.*
- 3) *Look for the application deadline of HKBU's Communication program.*

The test results provided me with valuable implication to improve my web design. For all the respondents, task one was pretty easy to finish. All of them directly went to the introduction page of PolyU and clicked the button for showing curriculum (see *Figure 13*). It took 12 seconds in average for them to finish this task, which indicated that the design of showing curriculum of these programs is reasonable.



Figure13 Introduction page – curriculum panel

For task two, it took 58 seconds in average for the respondents to finish it. Unlike what I expected, all the respondents looked for the world ranking of CUHK's communication and media studies subject in the introduction page of CUHK. However, I put it in

another column that is specifically designed for data visualization. It took them nearly half a minute in average to find the entry. From this test result, I considered to make some change in my website: add the world ranking data in the program introduction page to meet users' expectation and optimize the design of side navigation menu of the statistics column by changing the font size of column titles and adding pictures to make them more attractive to users (see *Figure 14*).



Figure 14 Side Navigation Bar

The test result of task three revealed some important issues in my web design. In average, it took one and a half minute for the respondents to successfully find the application deadline of HKBU. Like task two, most of them directly went to the introduction page of HKBU's communication program but failed to find what they want. Then they turned to the “申请攻略” column to search for what they want. This indicated that I should include all the admission requirements in the introduction page of each program. Besides, the title of column “申请攻略”(which means “application tips”) is not expressive enough. Another important issue is that two respondents in the mainland reported that they failed to open the page containing admission requirements contents. I guessed this is because the Airtable calendar that I used to show the application deadline was blocked in the mainland. Since I target my website at the mainland students, I should take this issue into account and find a new tool that will work in the mainland to show my contents.

After the respondents finished their tasks, I also invited them to share with me their

feelings and suggestions to improve my website. One of the suggestion is that more DIY experience from people with different backgrounds should be included. I think I will try to invite more people with diversified backgrounds to share their application experience in my website. And also, like the guest mentioned in our presentation section, I could consider show the contents in the form of short videos instead of pure texts. The other important suggestion from my respondent is that a sharing community could be included to help applicants group together and communicate with each other.

From the usability test, I got a lot of helpful suggestions and implications from my respondents. All the issues I found and all the suggestions I got will help me a lot in the improvement of my website design.

V. A/B Test

During the process of usability test, I found that my respondents always ignored some clickable texts that I created. In order to find out how important copywriting was in navigating the users, I created an A/B test experiment in Google Optimization. On the B version of my website, I changed the title “香港高校传媒专业介绍” into “点击查看传媒专业介绍” (see *Figure15*). I want to check whether a “call to action” copywriting could lead more users to click the texts or not.



Figure 15 A/B test

After running the experiment for six days, I got the following results. It could be observed that compared with the original version, the conversion rate of version B is higher than that of the original version (see *Figure16*), which somehow echoes my assumption that an “call to action” copywriting is more effective. But more tests should be conducted for a further validation since I found that only a few users click this text line. I think I would further deepen my skills in A/B test and conduct more effective experiments to optimize my website.

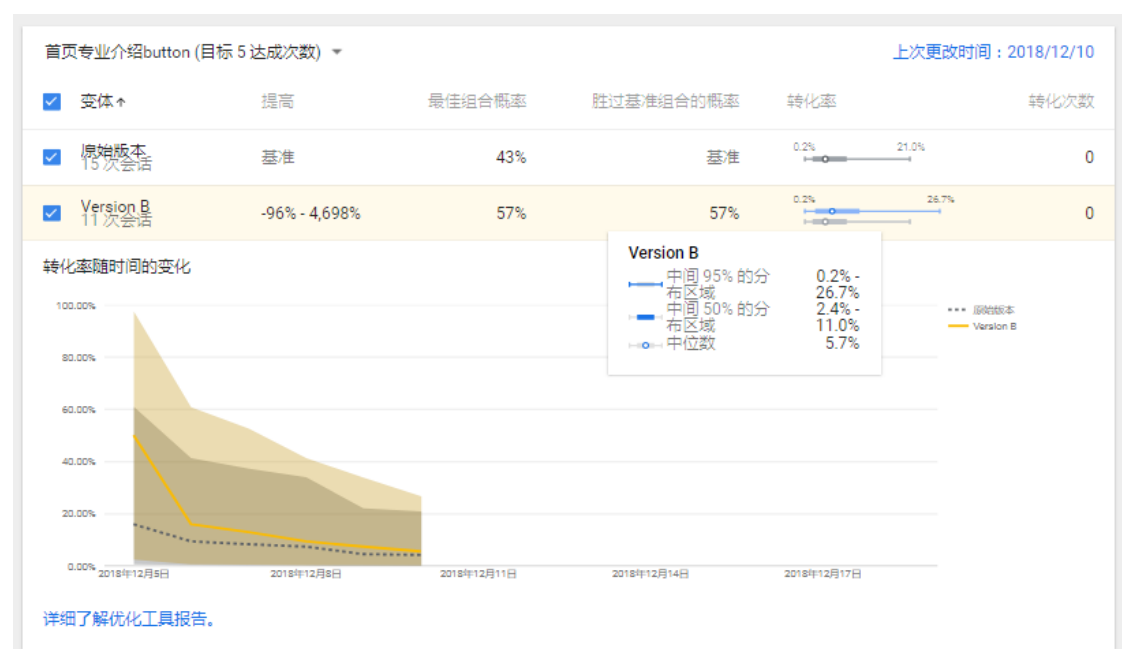


Figure16 A/B Test Result

VI. Web Analytics

Since all the crucial stages to build my website have been finished, I started to promote my website among my target users. In this stage, I try to measure my web performance with the help of Google Analytics. From the data shown in Google Analytics, I hope to get a clearer picture that how my web design performs and figure out some effective ways to improve my web design. I started to promote my website on 3rd December. After a week's promotion, 298 users were attracted to visit my website with a total page view of 1113. Among them, 9.7% of the users visited my website more than one times (see *Figure 17*).

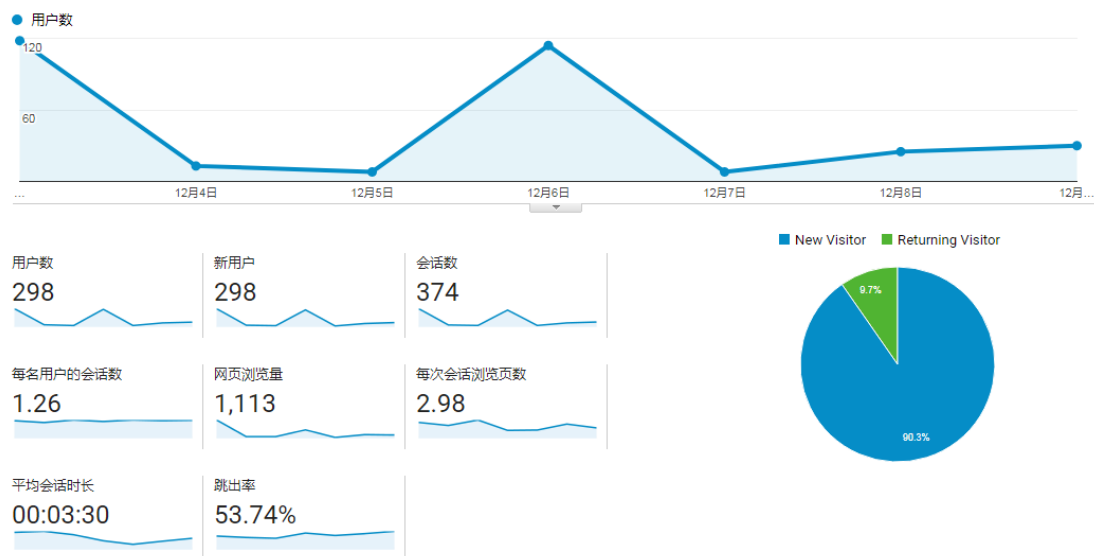


Figure 17 Traffic Overview

From figure 17 I can also see that users stayed in my website for less than 4 minutes and the bounce rate reached 53.74% in average, which has a huge space to be improved. In order to find out which page that my users are most interested in so as to find out more methods to retain my users, I check the pages report in Google Analytics.

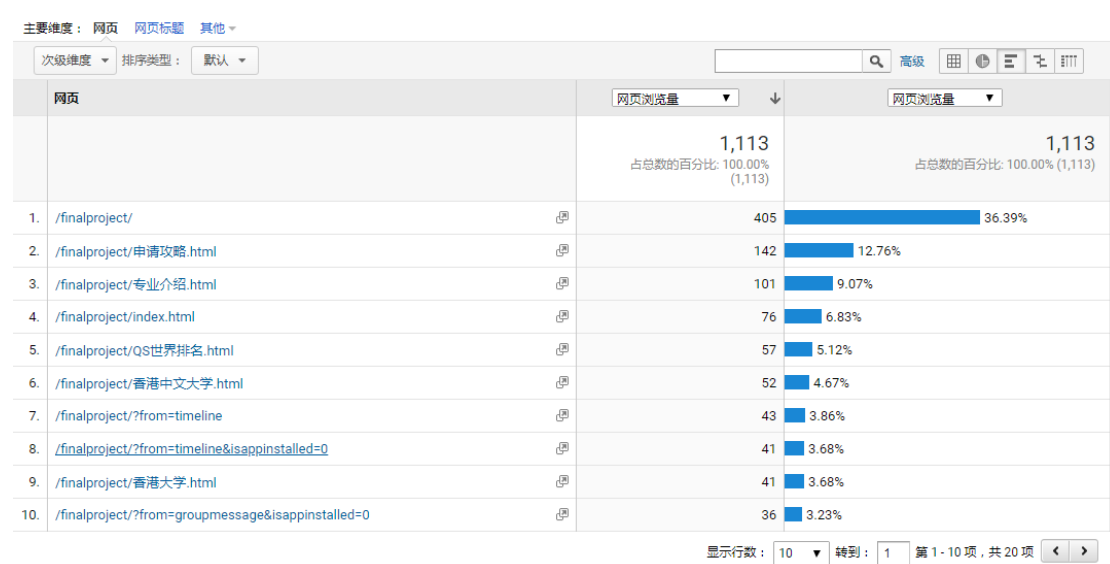


Figure18 Pages Report

From the above figure, I could clearly tell that the homepage gains 405 visits, ranking the top among all the pages. It is reasonable because the homepage is the first page to visit when almost all the users enter my website. It is worth mentioning that the page

of application tips acquires 142 visits, which means that half of the visitors will go to this page. It gives me some implications that most of the applicants are looking for useful application tips. I could try to optimize this page and make the contents more abundant so as to attract more target users.

In order to find out which channel could help me gain traffic as much as possible, I track the traffic data coming from different source (see *Figure 19*). I mainly promoted my website in WeChat moment, WeChat groups and Weibo. I tried to promote my website in China's biggest overseas study forum, but my article was blocked so I could not track any traffic from this source. What's more, I labeled different WeChat groups to see what kind of group could attract more users.

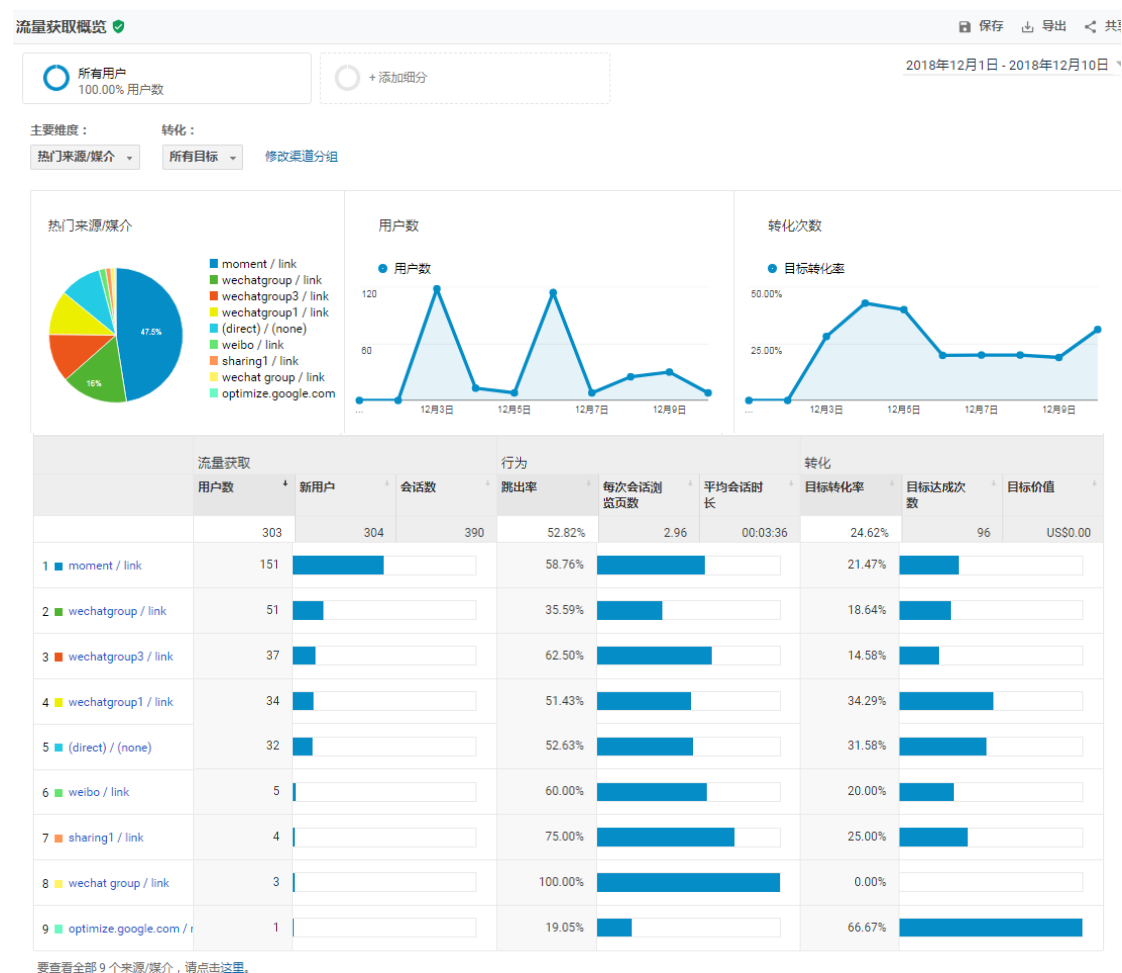


Figure 19 Traffic Source

From the above statistics I could tell that most of the traffic comes from the WeChat moment. Since this is a personal project, it is effective that I try to promote my website among people who are familiar with me. Ranking in the second is the channel labeled

“wechatgroup” attracts 51 visitors to my website. This is a group gathering over 200 people who are interested in Hong Kong’s postgraduate programs. So, I could find my target users more effectively in this kind of group.

In order to find out the media using behaviors of my target users, I also check the metric of “session by devices”. From the pie chart in *Figure 20* I could clearly tell that a large proportion of my users visit my website on mobile phones. So, I will try to continuously optimize the mobile user experience of my website.



Figure20 Device Categories

VII. Conclusion

In this final project, I experienced the whole process of designing, developing, testing and promoting a brand new website. I learnt that the five planes of user experience elements should be carefully taken into account when a website is being designed. Then, a usability test should be conducted in order to validate the design. Finally, traffic and users’ behaviors should be tracked in both qualitative and quantitative ways to seek improvements. Each step is very crucial to the successful development of a website. In the future, I will try to continuously improve my website so that it could help more of my target users solve the problems they meet.