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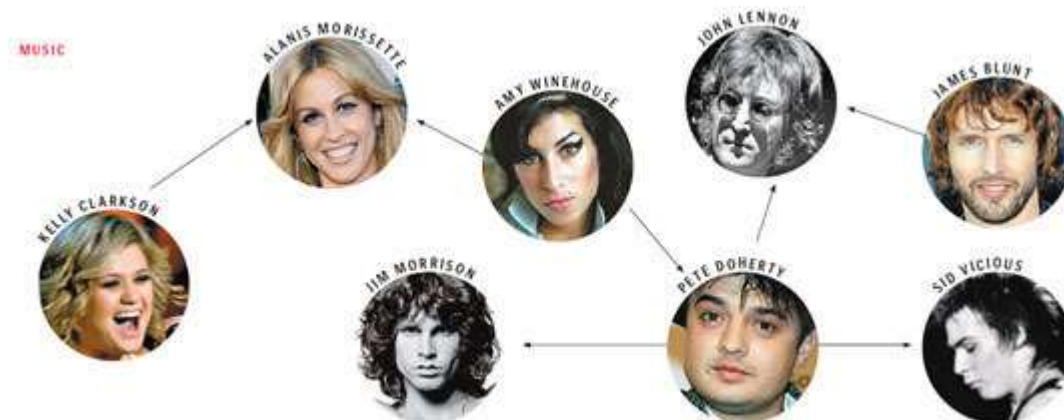
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The new, new things of 2007

The Boston Globe

Apple is the new NASA. Iran is the new Iraq. Beer is the new water, and water is the new oil.



(Chart by Roo Reynolds)

By Drake Bennett

December 30, 2007

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EARLY LAST MONTH, medical researchers at Spain's University of Granada called a press conference to announce their findings on the thirst-quenching properties of beer. In a study, 25 university students, after exhausting themselves on a treadmill in 104-degree heat, had been given either water or Spanish lager to drink. According to the University of Granada team, it was the beer that, by a slender margin, proved more effective at rehydrating the students, thanks to its bubbles, salts, and carbohydrates. Beer, news reports were quick to proclaim, was the new water.

And water? Development experts have begun to worry that industrialization, pollution, and even climate change are turning it into a scarce commodity in many parts of the world. Analysts paint a picture of growing domestic unrest, geopolitical jockeying, even water wars. Water, in short, is the new oil.

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So, too, is milk. This year, with a swelling global middle class thirsty for milk (and butter, cheese, milk chocolate, lattes, and dairy-heavy baked goods) and with prices for livestock feed being driven up by the biofuel boom, milk prices are soaring. Governments are imposing price controls, and the United

States, among others, has seen its butter stockpiles all but disappear. "In a growing world," read a late-August headline in the International Herald Tribune, "milk is the new oil."

If you want to know what happened in 2007, you could do worse than noting what it was that people decided was the new black, or the new oil, or the new golf.

Because it is so ubiquitous and so adaptable, because it so easily captures the human mind's penchant for analogies, and because it is constantly rendering itself obsolete (what is the new iPhone? who is the new Amy Winehouse?), this off-the-shelf rhetorical device makes an ideal marker of a year's conversational currents. The charts here are an unsystematic attempt, culled from Web searches, to trace the patterns that emerge.

Nobody knows who first called something "the new black." Linguists have traced the term to the early 1980s - they believe, to no one's surprise, that it first arose in the fashion world. Some see an early ancestor in the much-repeated proclamation, by legendary Vogue magazine editor Diana Vreeland, that "Pink is the navy blue of India" (navy blue being the black of Vreeland's 1960s-era New York).

Regardless, the term has stuck, and proliferated, metastasizing along the way. Gray, we've heard, is the new black, pink is the new black, George Clooney is the new Cary Grant, small is the new big, black is the new white, Facebook is the new Google is the new Microsoft.

Plotting a year's profusion visually allows a certain textural logic to emerge. Cultural novelty unfolds in long transitive cascades - werewolves to vampires to zombies to pirates to ninjas - and in clusters around particularly hot or tendentious topics. [Continued...](#)

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