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Abstract

YOUTH IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN INTERNET
CAFES

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With the popularity of online gaming and information technology, Internet cafés have become a trendy site of youth consumption. Young people invest their time and money there. However, with the social labeling, Internet café is constructed as a dangerous place for young people. As adolescence is a time of exploration and experimentation, this thesis aims to discover how teenagers construct their identity at Internet café which includes both real and virtual space for teenagers to explore themselves. The findings show that teenagers have a subordinate identity in real space; they have to negotiate and resist their own identity in order to survive in the space which is mediated by the adult power. However, situated in cyberspace, they are more freely to construct their stylish selves. To do this, they value the uses of images and symbols when they create their virtual selves. Although they do not intend to create their identity in a specific way, their mode of thinking and emotion are the driving forces to determine who they are in the cyberspace. After all, the virtual youth identity becomes multiple and flexible as they are able to construct their identities through their wants and needs.