Abstract:
After the development of Internet, some people argued that a new form of community appeared, which was the virtual community. Within these virtual communities, different people who never engage in in-person contacts with each other develop relationships and engage in communication. In order to investigate the characteristics of these virtual communities, especially those for young people, this paper will present the results of a content analysis study of the Yahoo! Clubs for Teenagers. At present, around 8,900 different clubs for teenagers were established in the website of YAHOO! (www.yahoo.com).

By using the research framework developed by Wellman and Gulia (1999), the following questions will be addressed in this paper: what kinds of social resources (such as information, emotional support, companionship, a sense of belonging and etc.) are exchanged in these virtual communities? Are social resources given in the virtual communities reciprocated? Do members of the clubs develop attachment to the virtual communities? Are strong and intimate ties possible in the virtual communities? What are the similarities and differences between virtual communities and real-life communities?