

DESCRIPTION

WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICE, COMMUNICATION SYSTEM, AND
COMMUNICATION METHOD

3 TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001]

The present technique relates to wireless communication devices. More particularly, the present technique relates to wireless communication devices that
10 exchange various kinds of information by using wireless communications, a communication system, and a communication method.

BACKGROUND ART

15 [0002]

In recent years, wireless communication devices that perform wireless communications by using wireless LANs (local Area Networks) have been widely spread. As typical examples of the wireless LANs, wireless LANs compliant with IEEE
20 (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) 802.11 are widely spread.

[0003]

There is also a suggested wireless communication system that performs wireless communications by using the same
25 frequency among wireless communication devices (see Patent Document 1, for example).

CITATION LIST

PATENT DOCUMENT

30 [0004]

Patent Document 1: JP 2011-124980 A

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION

[0005]

With the above conventional technique, a connection to another group can be made while the connections among the wireless communication devices forming the same group are maintained.

[0006]

While the wireless communication devices are wirelessly connected, various kinds of applications might be executed among those wireless communication devices. For example, an application might be designated by a user operation both before and after wireless connection establishment. In this case, it would be convenient if an application desired by a user can be readily used both before and after wireless connection establishment, for example.

[0007]

Embodiments of the present invention are developed in view of those circumstances, and aims to allow users to readily use desired applications.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

[0008]

Embodiments of the present invention provide a wireless communication device, a communication method for the wireless communication device, and a program for causing a computer to implement the method.

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a wireless communication device including a communication unit configured to perform a connected device discovery process before a wireless connection is established by transmitting/receiving one of a Probe Request and a Probe

Response specified in IEEE 802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe Response, and perform an establishment process to establish the wireless connection by transmitting/receiving data including an information element for designating the specific application when a connected device discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with the specific application; and a control unit configured to perform control to designate the specific application by transmitting/receiving data including information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection when the specific application is designated after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process.

Accordingly, in a case where a specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process but the specific application is designated after a wireless connection is established, the specific application can be designated by transmitting/receiving data including information equivalent to the information element for designating the specific application, without cutoff of the wireless connection.

[0009]

In this first aspect, when the specific application is designated by a user operation after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process, the control unit may perform the control to designate the specific application by transmitting the data including the information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection. Accordingly, in a case where a specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment

process but the specific application is designated by a user operation after a wireless connection is established, the specific application can be designated by transmitting data including information equivalent to the information element for designating the specific application, without cutoff of the wireless connection.

[0010]

In this first aspect, when receiving the data including the information equivalent to the information element from the wirelessly-connected wireless communication device after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process, the control unit may perform the control to designate the specific application by transmitting the data including the information equivalent to the information element as a response to the received data to the wirelessly-connected wireless communication device without cutoff of the wireless connection. Accordingly, in a case where a specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process but data including information equivalent to the information element for designating the specific application is received from a wirelessly-connected wireless communication device after the wireless connection is established, the specific application can be designated by transmitting the data including the information equivalent to the information element as a response to the received data to the wirelessly-connected wireless communication device, without cutoff of the wireless connection.

[0011]

In this first aspect, the control unit may transmit/receive a vendor specific action frame specified in

the IEEE802.11 specification as the data including the information equivalent to the information element. With this structure, a vendor specific action frame specified in the IEEE802.11 specification can be transmitted/received as data including information equivalent to the information element for designating a specific application.

[0012]

In this first aspect, the control unit may transmit a request frame as the vendor specific action frame, the request frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying the role the wireless communication device transmitting the request frame is to play in the specific application. With this structure, a request frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element can be transmitted as a vendor specific action frame.

[0013]

In this first aspect, the control unit may transmit a response frame as the vendor specific action frame, the response frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying the role the wireless communication device transmitting the response frame in response to a request frame is to play in the specific application. With this structure, a response frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element can be transmitted as a vendor specific action frame.

[0014]

In this first aspect, the control unit may encapsulate

and transmit an association request frame body into the vendor specific action frame, the association request frame body using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying the role the wireless communication device transmitting a request frame is to play in the specific application, the association request frame body containing the information element. With this structure, an association request frame body that uses a vendor specific Information Element as the information element and contains the information element can be encapsulated into a vendor specific action frame and be then transmitted.

[0015]

In this first aspect, the control unit may encapsulate and transmit an association response frame body into the vendor specific action frame, the association response frame body using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying the role the wireless communication device transmitting a response frame in response to a request frame is to play in the specific application, the association response frame body containing the information element. With this structure, an association response frame body that uses a vendor specific Information Element as the information element and contains the information element can be encapsulated into a vendor specific action frame and be then transmitted.

[0016]

In this first aspect, the control unit may have an

encrypted frame transmitted/received as the data including the information equivalent to the information element. With this structure, an encrypted frame can be transmitted/received as data including information
5 equivalent to the information element.

[0017]

In this first aspect, the communication unit may establish a connection in the second layer as the wireless connection. Accordingly, a connection in the second layer
10 can be established as a wireless connection.

[0018]

In this first aspect, the communication unit may perform the connected device discovery process by transmitting/receiving one of a Probe Request and a Probe
15 Response specified in the IEEE802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe Response. With this structure, the connected device discovery process can be performed by transmitting/receiving
20 one of a Probe Request and a Probe Response specified in the IEEE802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe Response.

[0019]

25 In this first aspect, the wireless communication device may be compliant with the IEEE802.11 specification, which enables P2P (Peer to Peer) connections. With this structure, a wireless connection can be established with the use of wireless communication devices compliant with the IEEE802.11
30 specification, which enables P2P connections.

[0020]

Embodiments of the present invention provide a communication system, a communication method for the communication system, and a program for causing a computer to implement the method.

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a communication system including a first wireless communication device and a second wireless communication device configured to perform a connected device discovery process on each other before a wireless connection is established by being configured to transmit/receive one of a Probe Request and a Probe Response specified in IEEE 802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe Response, and to perform an establishment process to establish the wireless connection by being configured to transmit and receive, to and from each other, data including an information element for designating the specific application when a connected device discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with the specific application, wherein, when the specific application is designated after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process, the first wireless communication device and the second wireless communication device are configured to transmit and receive, to and from each other, data including information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection.

Accordingly, in a case where a specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process but the specific application is designated after a wireless connection is established, the specific application can be designated by exchanging data including information equivalent to the information element for designating the specific application, without cutoff of the wireless connection.

According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a communication method including a first procedure to perform a connected device discovery process before a wireless connection is established by transmitting/receiving one of a Probe Request and a Probe Response specified in IEEE 802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe Response; a second procedure to perform an establishment process to establish the wireless connection by transmitting/receiving data including an information element for designating the specific application when a connected device discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with the specific application; and a third procedure to perform control to designate the specific application by transmitting/receiving data including information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection when the specific application is designated after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process.

EFFECTS OF THE INVENTION

[0021]

Embodiments of the present invention provide a great effect to allow users to readily use desired applications.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0022]

Fig. 1 is a diagram showing an example structure of a communication system 10 in an embodiment of the present technique.

Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing an example functional structure of a first wireless communication device 100 in an embodiment of the present technique.

Fig. 3 is a diagram schematically showing an example structure of a peer list 180 stored in a memory 150 in an embodiment of the present technique.

Fig. 4 is a diagram showing an example display screen (a connection detail select screen 190) displayed on the display unit 170 of the first wireless communication device 100 in an embodiment of the present technique.

Fig. 5 is a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device on which the present technique is based.

Fig. 6 is a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device on which the present technique is based.

Fig. 7 is a diagram schematically showing an example structure of the format of a frame to be transmitted/received in a communication process by each device on which the present technique is based.

Fig. 8 is a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device on which

the present technique is based.

Fig. 9 is a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device on which the present technique is based.

5 Fig. 10 is a diagram schematically showing an example structure of the format of a frame to be transmitted/received in a communication process between respective devices in an embodiment of the present technique.

10 Fig. 11 is a diagram schematically showing an example structure of the format of a frame to be transmitted/received in a communication process between respective devices in an embodiment of the present technique.

15 Fig. 12 is a diagram schematically showing an example structure of the format of a frame to be transmitted/received in a communication process between respective devices in an embodiment of the present technique.

Fig. 13 is a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device in an embodiment of the present technique.

20 Fig. 14 is a flowchart showing the procedures in an example communication process to be performed by the first wireless communication device 100 in an embodiment of the present technique.

25 Fig. 15 is a flowchart showing the procedures in the example communication process to be performed by the first wireless communication device 100 in an embodiment of the present technique.

30 Fig. 16 is a flowchart showing the procedures in the example communication process to be performed by the first wireless communication device 100 in an embodiment of the present technique.

MODES FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

[0023]

5 The following is a description of modes for carrying out the present technique (hereinafter referred to as the embodiments). Explanation will be made in the following order.

1. Embodiments (Communication control: examples where a specific application to be used after a connection in the second layer is designated, without cutoff of the connection in the second layer)

[0024]

<1. Embodiments>

[Example structure of a communication system]

15 Fig. 1 is a diagram showing an example structure of a communication system 10 in an embodiment of the present technique.

[0025]

20 The communication system 10 includes a first wireless communication device 100, a second wireless communication device 200, a third wireless communication device 300, and a fourth wireless communication device 400.

[0026]

25 The first wireless communication device 100, the second wireless communication device 200, the third wireless communication device 300, and the fourth wireless communication device 400 each have a wireless communication function, are connected to one another, and are capable of transmitting/receiving various kinds of information by using wireless communications. The respective wireless communication devices are wireless communication device

30

compliant with IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) 802.11, which enables P2P (Peer to Peer) connections. That is, the respective wireless communication devices form a communication group, and can communicate directly with one another without the intervention of an access point (not shown). In this case, which wireless communication device is to operate as the group owner and which wireless communication devices are to operate as clients may or may not be determined when the respective wireless communication devices are manufactured. In a case where any determination is not made at the time of manufacturing, the wireless communication devices can determine, through negotiation, which one of the wireless communication devices is to operate as the group owner, and which ones of the wireless communication devices are to operate as clients. For example, in a case where the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200 form a communication group, the first wireless communication device 100 can transmit data (video content, for example) directly to the second wireless communication device 200. In this case, the wireless communication devices are connected to each other, and video content stored in the first wireless communication device 100 can be displayed on the second wireless communication device 200. Known examples of communications standards for allowing wireless communication devices to communicate directly with one another include Wi-Fi Direct.

[0027]

The first wireless communication device 100 is a portable telephone device (such as a wireless communication device having a verbal communication function and a data

communication function), for example. The second wireless communication device 200 is a video viewing device (such as a television receiver with a built-in hard disk) that records or displays video content, for example. The third wireless communication device 300 is an information processing device (such as a notebook PC (Personal Computer)) that performs various kinds of information processing, for example. The fourth wireless communication device 400 is a portable information processing device (such as a smartphone having a verbal communication function and a data communication function), for example.

[0028]

The first wireless communication device 100, the second wireless communication device 200, the third wireless communication device 300, and the fourth wireless communication device 400 can be connected to an access point (not shown) by using wireless communications, to transmit/receive various kinds of information. Here, the access point is an access point compliant with a wireless LAN standard such as IEEE802.11a/b/g/n. That is, with a router and an access point (or a product having a router including an access point, for example), a wireless LAN standardized by IEEE802.11a/b/g/n is realized.

[0029].

Examples of data to be communicated among the wireless communication devices include music data of music and radio programs, image data of movies, television programs, video programs, photographs, documents, pictures, drawings, and the like, game data, or data of software and the like.

[0030]

The wireless communication devices shown in Fig. 1 are

merely examples, and some other wireless communication devices may be used. For example, an imaging device (such as a digital still camera or a digital video camera (a recorder with a camera, for example, having a wireless communication function, and an audio output device (such as a portable music player) having a wireless communication function can be used. Also, a display device (such as a digital photo frame) having a wireless communication function, and an electronic book reader having a wireless communication function can be used, for example. Other information processing devices each having a wireless communication function can also be used, for example. Examples of information processing devices having a wireless communication function include home video processing devices (such as DVD recorders and video cassette recorders), PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants), home video game machines, electric household appliances, portable video processing devices, portable game machines, and the like. Information processing devices (such as personal computers having no wireless communication functions) that can perform wireless communications when equipped with a wireless communication device having a wireless communication function can also be used.

[0031]

[Example structure of a wireless communication device]

Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing an example functional structure of the first wireless communication device 100 in an embodiment of the present technique. The functional structures (functional structures related to wireless communications) of the second wireless communication device 200, the third wireless communication device 300, and the fourth wireless communication device 400 are substantially

the same as the functional structure of the first wireless communication device 100, and therefore, explanation of them is omitted herein. Also, when the components of the respective wireless communication devices other than the first wireless communication device 100 are explained in the description below, the same reference numerals as those used for the first wireless communication device 100 will be used.

[0032]

The first wireless communication device 100 includes an antenna 101, a data processing unit 110, a transmission processing unit 120, a wireless interface unit 130, a control unit 140, a memory 150, an operation accepting unit 160, and a display unit 170.

[0033]

Under the control of the control unit 140, the data processing unit 110 processes various kinds of data. When a transmitting operation is performed, for example, the data processing unit 110 creates various kinds of data frames and data packets in accordance with a request from a higher layer, and supplies the data frames and packets to the transmission processing unit 120. When a receiving operation is performed, for example, the data processing unit 110 processes and analyzes various kinds of data frames and data packets supplied from the transmission processing unit 120.

[0034]

Under the control of the control unit 140, the transmission processing unit 120 performs various transmission processes. When a transmitting operation is performed, for example, the transmission processing unit 120 performs a process to add various data headers and error detection codes such as FCSs (Frame Check Sequences) to

packets generated by the data processing unit 110. The transmission processing unit 120 then supplies the processed data to the wireless interface unit 130. When a receiving operation is performed, for example, the transmission processing unit 120 analyzes the headers attached to various kinds of data frames supplied from the wireless interface unit 130. After confirming that there are no errors in the data frames based on the error detection codes, the transmission processing unit 120 supplies the various kinds of data frames to the data processing unit 110.

[0035]

The wireless interface unit 130 is an interface that is connected to the other wireless communication devices to transmit/receive various kinds of information. When a transmitting operation is performed, for example, the wireless interface unit 130 generates a modulation signal of the frequency band of carrier waves from data received from the transmission processing unit 120, and transmits the generated modulation signal as a radio signal from the antenna 101. When a receiving operation is performed, for example, the wireless interface unit 130 down-converts a radio signal received by the antenna 101 into a bit stream, to decode various kinds of data frames.

[0036]

As described above, the data processing unit 110, the transmission processing unit 120, and the wireless interface unit 130 function as a communication unit 102. The communication unit 102 performs a connected device discovery process before a wireless connection (a connection in the second layer) is established. This connected device discovery process is device discovery, for example. This

device discovery is performed by adding device information and information indicating an associated specific application to a Probe Request or a Probe Response specified in the IEEE802.11 specification.

5 [0037]

The communication unit 102 also performs an establishment process for establishing a wireless connection (an establishment process for establishing a connection in the second layer). In a case where the connected device
10 discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with a specific application, the communication unit 102 performs the establishment process by transmitting/receiving data including the information element (shown in Fig. 7) for designating the specific
15 application.

[0038]

The control unit 140 controls respective receiving operations and transmitting operations of the data processing unit 110, the transmission processing unit 120, and the
20 wireless interface unit 130. For example, the control unit 140 performs operations, such as determination on the frequency to be used, creation of control messages, and interpretations of transmission commands and control messages. Examples of control messages include notification
25 information such as beacons, received responses to beacons, Probe requests, and Probe responses. The control to be performed by the control unit 140 will be described later in detail, with reference to Figs. 13 through 16.

[0039]

30 The memory 150 functions as a work area for the data processing performed by the control unit 140, and as a storage

medium storing various kinds of data. Also, various kinds of information (such as the information elements shown in Figs. 10 through 12) to be included in the data to be transmitted to the wireless communication device serving as the peer are recorded in the memory 150. The peer list 180 shown in Fig. 3 is also recorded in the memory 150. The memory 150 may be a storage medium such as a nonvolatile memory, a magnetic disk, an optical disk, or an MO (Magneto Optical) disk. The nonvolatile memory may be an EEPROM (Electrically Erasable Programmable Read-Only Memory) or an EPROM (Erasable Programmable ROM), for example. The magnetic disk may be a hard disk or a circular magnetic disk, for example. The optical disk may be a CD (Compact Disc), a DVD-R (Digital Versatile Disc Recordable), or a BD (Blu-Ray Disc (a registered trade name)), for example.

[0040]

The operation accepting unit 160 accepts an operation input from a user, and outputs operation information corresponding to the received operation input to the control unit 140. The operation accepting unit 160 may be a mouse, a keyboard, a touch panel, buttons, a microphone, switches, or a lever, for example. The operation accepting unit 160 also accepts an operation for transmitting/receiving various kinds of data to/from another wireless communication device.

25 [0041]

The display unit 170 is a display unit that displays various kinds of information (such as text information and time information) under the control of the control unit 140. The display unit 170 displays various kinds of information (such as the display screen shown in Fig. 4) for transmitting/receiving various kinds of data to/from another

wireless communication device, for example. The display unit 170 may be a display panel such as an organic EL (Electro Luminescence) panel or an LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) panel. The operation accepting unit 160 and the display unit 170 can be integrally formed with a touch panel through which a user can input an operation by touching the display surface with a finger or bringing a finger close to the display surface. [0042]

[Example structure of the peer list]

10 Fig. 3 is a diagram schematically showing an example structure of the peer list 180 stored in the memory 150 in an embodiment of the present technique. [0043]

The peer list 180 is formed with terminal identification information 181, MAC (Media Access Control) addresses 182, terminal types 183, and specific application association 184. These pieces of information are acquired from the respective wireless communication devices through execution of Device Discovery or the like, and are sequentially recorded by the control unit 140. [0044]

The terminal identification information 181 is the identification information (such as device specific IDs) for identifying the respective wireless communication devices. In Fig. 3, the terminal identification information is shown as "AAAA", "BBBB", and "CCCC", and the names of the corresponding wireless communication devices are shown in parentheses, for ease of explanation. [0045]

30 The MAC addresses 182 are physical addresses uniquely assigned to the respective wireless communication devices.

[0046]

The terminal types 183 are the information indicating the types of the respective wireless communication devices.

[0047]

5 The specific application association 184 is information indicating whether the respective wireless communication devices are associated with a specific application. In Fig. 3, the wireless communication devices associated with a specific application are accompanied by
10 "associated", and the names of the associated specific applications are shown in parentheses, for ease of explanation. The wireless communication devices not associated with any specific application are accompanied by "N/A".

15 [0048]

[Example display screen to be used in the case of a wireless connection with another wireless communication device]

Fig. 4 is a diagram showing an example display screen
20 (a connection detail select screen 190) displayed on the display unit 170 of the first wireless communication device 100 in an embodiment of the present technique.

[0049]

The connection detail select screen 190 shows
25 application-to-use select buttons 191 through 195, a cancel button 196, and an OK button 197.

[0050]

The application-to-use select buttons 191 through 195 are buttons for selecting a wireless communication device to
30 be the peer, and the application to be used in connecting to this wireless communication device. The application-to-use

select buttons 191 through 195 are displayed based on the details (such as the terminal identification information 181 and the specific application association 184) in the peer list 180 shown in Fig. 3, for example.

5 [0051]

When the OK button 197 is pressed after one of the application-to-use select buttons 191 through 195 is pressed, the control unit 140 performs control to execute the application corresponding to the pressed button.

10 [0052]

To cancel an operation corresponding to one of the application-to-use select buttons 191 through 195 after the one application-to-use select button is pressed, the cancel button 196 is pressed.

15 [0053]

[Example of a basic operation of a wireless communication device on which the present technique is based]

An example of a basic operation on which the present technique is based is now described.

20 [0054]

First, an example of wireless packet transmission/reception (Figs. 5 and 6) to be performed to establish a P2P (Peer to Peer) connection and start a specific application is described.

25 [0055]

Next, an example of wireless packet transmission/reception (Fig. 8) to be performed, prior to a connection in the second layer, to designate a specific application to be used, establish a P2P connection, and start a specific application is described.

30

[0056]

Next, an example of wireless packet transmission/reception (Fig. 9) to be performed to start a specific application after a connection in the second layer in a case where the example illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6 is combined with the example illustrated in Fig. 8 is described.
[0057]

[Example communication when a specific application is started]

Figs. 5 and 6 are a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device on which the present technique is based. Specifically, an example of procedures for establishing a direct connection that leads to a connection compliant with the Wi-Fi Direct standard (also called Wi-Fi P2P), which has been set by the Wi-Fi Alliance, is described.
[0058]

According to Wi-Fi Direct, wireless communication devices detect the existence of one another (Device Discovery and Service Discovery). Devices to be connected are then selected, and a direct connection is established between the selected devices by performing device authentication through WPS (Wi-Fi Protected Setup). According to Wi-Fi Direct, wireless communication devices form a communication group, with one of the wireless communication devices being determined to serve as the group owner, some of the wireless communication devices being determined to serve as clients.
[0059]

In the example communication process illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6, however, part of packet transmission/reception is not shown. For example, at the time of the first connection, exchanges of the packets for using WPS are necessary, and

transmission/reception of Authentication Request/Response also involves exchanges of packets. However, Figs. 5 and 6 do not show such exchanges of packets, and only show the second and later connections.

5 [0060]

Although Figs. 5 and 6 show an example communication process to be performed between the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200, the same communication process can
10 be performed between other wireless communication devices.
[0061]

First, Device Discovery is conducted between the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200 (501). For example, the first
15 wireless communication device 100 transmits a Probe request (a response request signal), and receives a Probe response (a response signal) to the Probe request from the second wireless communication device 200. With that, the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless
20 communication device 200 can discover the existence of each other. Through the Device Discovery, the device name and the type (TV, PC, smartphone, or the like) of each other can be obtained.

[0062]

25 Service Discovery is then conducted between the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200 (502). For example, the first wireless communication device 100 transmits Service Discovery Query so as to inquire about the service with which
30 the second wireless communication device 200, which has been discovered through the Device Discovery, is associated. The

first wireless communication device 100 then receives Service Discovery Response from the second wireless communication device 200, and obtains the service with which the second wireless communication device 200 is associated. That is,
5 the service and the like the other device can execute can be obtained through the Service Discovery. The service the other device can execute may be a service or a protocol (such as DLNA (Digital Living Network Alliance) or DMR(Digital Media Renderer)), for example.

10 [0063]

A user then performs an operation to select the peer (a peer select operation) (503). This peer select operation is performed in only one of the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200
15 in some cases. For example, a peer select screen is displayed on the display unit 170 of the first wireless communication device 100, and the second wireless communication device 200 is selected as the peer on the peer select screen through a user operation.

20 [0064]

After the peer select operation is performed by the user (503), Group Owner Negotiation is conducted between the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200 (504). In the example illustrated
25 in Figs. 5 and 6, as a result of the Group Owner Negotiation, the first wireless communication device 100 becomes a group owner 505, and the second wireless communication device 200 becomes a client 506.

[0065]

30 Respective procedures (507 through 510) are then carried out between the first wireless communication device

100 and the second wireless communication device 200, to establish a direct connection. Specifically, Association (L2 (the second layer link establishment) (507) and Secure link establishment (508) are sequentially conducted. Also, 5 IP Address Assignment (509) and L4 setup in L3 by SSDP (Simple Service Discovery Protocol) or the like (510) are sequentially conducted.

[0066]

The user then performs a specific application designating or starting operation (an application designating/starting operation) (511). This application designating/starting operation is performed in only one of the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200 in some cases. For example, 15 an application designating/starting operation screen (the connection detail select screen 190 shown in Fig. 4, for example) is displayed on the display unit 170 of the first wireless communication device 100, and a specific application is selected on this application designating/starting operation screen through a user operation. 20

[0067]

After the user performs the application designating/starting operation (511), the specific application corresponding to this application designating/starting operation is executed between the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200 (512). 25

[0068]

In an example case, a connection between an AP (Access Point) and a STA (Station) is established within an older specification than the Wi-Fi Direct standard (a specification 30

standardized by IEEE802.11). In this case, there is no way to recognize to which device a connection is to be established prior to a connection in the second layer (prior to association as specified in IEEE802.11).

5 [0069]

According to Wi-Fi Direct, on the other hand, information about a peer can be obtained when candidate peers are searched in Device Discovery and Service Discovery (option), as shown in Figs. 5 and 6. The information about
10 a peer is the type of the fundamental device, the associated specific application, or the like. The user can select a peer based on the obtained information about a peer.

[0070]

This mechanism can be extended to realize a wireless
15 communication system that designates a specific application prior to a connection in the second layer, selects a peer, and automatically starts the specific application after the selection. An example of a sequence to establish a connection in such a case is shown in Fig. 8. An example structure of
20 the format of a frame to be transmitted/received in this communication process is shown in Fig. 7.

[0071]

[Example structure of a frame format]

Fig. 7 is a diagram schematically showing an example
25 structure of the format of a frame to be transmitted/received in a communication process by each device on which the present technique is based. That is, Fig. 7 shows an example structure of a MAC frame for establishing a connection in the second layer. Specifically, the frame format is an example
30 of the frame format of Association Request/Response (527) for realizing the sequence shown in Fig. 8.

[0072]

It should be noted that the MAC header is formed with Frame Control (601) through Sequence Control (606). When Association Request is transmitted, B3B2 = "0b00" and
 5 B7B6B5B4 = "0b0000" are set in Frame Control (601). When Association Response is encapsulated, B3B2 = "0b00" and B7B6B5B4 = "0b0001" are set in Frame Control (601). Here, "0b00" means "00" in binary, "0b0000" means "0000" in binary, and "0b0001" means "0001" in binary.

10 [0073]

The MAC frame shown in Fig. 7 basically has the Association Request/Response frame format specified in sections 7.2.3.4 and 7.2.3.5 in the IEEE802.11-2007 specification. However, the MAC frame includes not only an
 15 Information Element (hereinafter referred to simply as IE) defined in the IEEE802.11 specification but also a uniquely-extended IE.

[0074]

To indicate Vendor Specific IE (610), "127" is set as
 20 a decimal number in IE Type (Information Element ID (611)). In this case, according to section 7.3.2.26 in the IEEE802.11-2007 specification, a Length field (612) and an OUI field (613) come after Information Element ID (611), followed by vendor specific content (614).

25 [0075]

In the vendor specific content (614), a field indicating the type of the vendor specific IE (IE type (615)) is first set. Subelements (616) can come after IE Type (615).

[0076]

30 Subelements (616) may include the name of the specific application to be used (617) and the role of the device during

execution of the specific application (618). Subelements (616) may also include information about the specific application or information such as the port number to be used for controlling the specific application (information for L4 setup) (619), and information about the capabilities in the specific application (Capability information). Here, the Capability information is the information for detecting compatibility with audio transmission/reproduction, compatibility with video transmission/reproduction, and the like when the designated specific application is DLNA, for example.

[0077]

[Example communication when a specific application is started]

Fig. 8 is a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device on which the present technique is based. Fig. 8 illustrates an example communication process to be performed to designate a specific application prior to a connection in the second layer, select a peer, and automatically start the specific application after the selection. The sequence chart shown in Fig. 8 is a modification formed by partially modifying the sequence chart shown in Figs. 5 and 6, and therefore, explanation of the same aspects as those in Figs. 5 and 6 will not be made below.

[0078]

First, Device Discovery is conducted between the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200 (521).

[0079]

Here, the Probe request (the response request

signal)/Probe response (the response signal) used in the stage of device discovery can include the vendor specific IE (610) shown in Fig. 7. Accordingly, the association with a specific application and the capability information

5 indicating the role the device can play during execution of the specific application can be acquired in the stage of Device Discovery. Here, the role the device can play during execution of the specific application is the role of a server/client, a master/slave, a source/sink, or the like.

10 [0080]

Service Discovery is then conducted between the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200 (522).

[0081]

15 Here, detailed capability information about the specific application (such as information about the details of the associated media format in the case of DLNA) can be included in the stage of Service Discovery. Accordingly, the detailed capability information in the specific application
20 can be acquired.

[0082]

The respective procedures (523 and 524) shown in Fig. 8 are equivalent to the respective procedures 503 and 504 shown in Fig. 5.

25 [0083]

Respective procedures (527 through 529) are then carried out between the first wireless communication device 100 and the second wireless communication device 200, to establish a direct connection.

30 [0084]

Here, the frame (MAC frame) shown in Fig. 7 is

transmitted/received as Association Request/Response in the stage of Association (527). Accordingly, the specific application to be used after a connection in the second layer can be designated in the stage (527) of an exchange of packets
5 (Association Request/Response) for establishing the connection in the second layer. Also, the information necessary in using the specific application can be included in the stage (527).

[0085]

10 As described above, in the example illustrated in Fig. 8, a different information exchange from that in the example illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6 is performed in the stages of device discovery (521) and Service Discovery (522). With this difference, the user can implicitly designate the
15 specific application to be used after a connection in the second layer by selecting a device prior to the connection in the second layer.

[0086]

Also, with the difference in the stage (527) of the
20 exchange of a packet for establishing the connection in the second layer from the example illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6, the application to be used can be automatically determined, and the number of steps to be taken by the user can be reduced by one.

25 [0087]

Further, compared with the example illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6, the stage (510) of L4 setup in L3 by SSDP or the like can be skipped. Accordingly, the user can feel that the time until the application start is shortened.

30 [0088]

An example case where a specific application is started

by using the mechanism illustrated in Fig. 8 after a connection in the second layer is now described. In this case, the mechanism illustrated in Fig. 8 implicitly designates the specific application to be used in the vendor specific IE (610 shown in Fig. 7) included in Association Request/Response. The information necessary for executing the specific application is also included in the vendor specific IE (610). As a result, a problem arises in the case where the specific application is started by using the mechanism illustrated in Fig. 8 after a connection in the second layer. This example is illustrated in Fig. 9.

[0089]

[Example communication when a specific application is started]

Fig. 9 is a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device on which the present technique is based. Fig. 9 illustrates an example communication process to be performed in a case where a specific application is started by using the mechanism illustrated in Fig. 8 after a connection in the second layer.

[0090]

The sequence chart shown in Fig. 9 is an example formed by combining the sequence chart shown in Figs. 5 and 6 with the sequence chart shown in Fig. 8, and therefore, explanation of the same aspects as those in Figs. 5, 6, and 8 will not be made below. Specifically, in the communication process indicated by a rectangle 541, the respective procedures (501 through 512) shown in Figs. 5 and 6 are carried out. In the process indicate by a rectangle 543, the respective procedures (521 through 531) shown in Fig. 8 are carried out.

[0091]

An example case where a specific application is started after a connection in the second layer is established, and another application is executed (541), as shown in Figs. 5 and 6, is now described. In this case, a process to temporarily cut off the L2 (second layer) link is performed by an exchange of Disassociation Request/Response (542), and a re-connection is established (543) by using the procedures shown in Fig. 8.

[0092]

10 As described above, when a specific application is started, Device Discovery, a second-layer connection process, a secure link establishment process, an IP address assignment process, and the like are again performed. Therefore, collisions due to use of a resource in a wireless zone increase, and the waiting time of the user increases with the time required for those processes.

[0093]

20 So as to avoid cutting off of the link in the second layer, a protocol in L3/L4 such as SDP may be used in switching to a specific application as in a case where another application is started, as shown in Figs. 5 and 6, for example.

[0094]

25 In this case, however, the protocol not required in executing the specific application has to be supported, as shown in Fig. 8. Further, an application connection request is issued from a different layer in this case. Therefore, implementation of the application trigger portion might become complicated. For example, when a specific application is executed by the mechanism illustrated in Fig. 8, a trigger for the specific application is issued from the second layer. When a specific application is started by

reusing the existing L2 (second layer) link, on the other hand, a protocol in L3/L4 such as SDP is used. When a protocol in L3/L4 such as SDP is used, a trigger for a specific application is issued from L3/L4, and an connection management entity
5 should be prepared for more than one layer. As a result, implementation might become complicated.

[0095]

In view of this, an embodiment of the present technique suggests an example where a specific application can be
10 readily used even after a connection in the second layer.

[0096]

[Example structure of a frame format]

Fig. 10 is a diagram schematically showing an example structure of the format of a frame to be transmitted/received
15 in a communication process between respective devices in an embodiment of the present technique. That is, Fig. 10 shows an example structure of an action frame that triggers a start of a specific application (a specific application start) after a connection in the second layer. Specifically, Fig.
20 10 shows an example structure of a vendor specific action frame at the MAC layer level.

[0097]

Here, a vendor specific action frame is an action frame containing the vendor specific IE.

25 [0098]

When a packet exchange is performed to start a specific application, necessary information can be exchanged by using the action frame defined in the IEEE802.11-2007 specification.

30 [0099]

It should be noted that the MAC header is formed with

Frame Control (631) through Sequence Control (636). In Frame Control (631) in the MAC header, B3B2 = "0b00" and B7B6B5B4 = "0b1101" are set. With this setting, this frame can be presented as an action frame classified as a management frame.

5 [0100]

Also, "127" is set as a decimal number in the Category field (639) in the frame body (637), to indicate that this action frame is a vendor specific frame. In this case, according to section 7.4.5 in the IEEE802.11-2007

10 specification, an OUI field (640) and a Vendor Specific Content field (641) come after the Category field (639).

[0101]

Various kinds of information is set in the vendor specific content field (641), so that the operation sequence shown in Fig. 13 can be realized. Here, the various kinds of information include the name of the specific application to be used, the role of the device at a time of execution of the specific application, and the like. The various kinds of information also include information about the specific application or information such as a port number to be used for controlling the specific application (information for L4 setup), and the Capability information in the specific application, for example.

[0102]

25 While there may be various methods for implementing the Vendor Specific Content field (641), the following two example structures (shown in Figs. 11 and 12) are used in embodiments of the present technique.

[0103]

30 [Example structure of a frame format]

Fig. 11 is a diagram schematically showing an example

structure of the format of a frame to be transmitted/received in a communication process between respective devices in an embodiment of the present technique. Specifically, Fig. 11 shows an example case where a vendor specific Information Element is used as the Vendor Specific Content of the vendor specific action frame shown in Fig. 10. In short, Fig. 11 shows a configuration method using an information element (IE).

[0104]

10 Here, the Vendor Specific Content is preferably divided into more than one portion, so as to indicate for what purpose the vendor specific action frame is to be used. For example, the Vendor Specific Content is preferably divided into the portion of vendor specific content type (652) and an
15 information element storage portion (653) that follows. That is, the vendor specific content type (652) can indicate for what purpose the vendor specific action frame is to be used.

[0105]

20 In the embodiment of the present technique, the type of each frame is supposedly written in the vendor specific content type (652). The type may be the type of a request frame for indicating the peer a start a specific application or the type of a response frame for responding to the
25 indication, while there is a P2P L2 (second layer) link, for example.

[0106]

 In the information element storage portion (653), a Length field (655) and an OUI field (656) follow, as specified
30 in section 7.3.2.26 in the IEEE802.11-2007 specification. Vendor specific content (657) comes after the OUI field (656).

[0107]

The vendor specific content (657) is divided into an information element type (658) and subelements (659) that constitute the information element. The subelements portion
5 (659) is further divided into subelements (660 through 663).

[0108]

The type portion (658) contains information indicating that the information element is for starting a specific application, and the subelements portion (659) contains
10 various kinds of information. The various kinds of information in the subelements portion (659) include the name of the specific application to be used (660) and the role of the device during execution of the specific application (661). The various kinds of information also include information
15 about the specific application or information such as a port number to be used for controlling the specific application (information for L4 setup) (662), and the Capability information (663) in the specific application. The Capability information is the information indicating
20 compatibility with audio transmission/reproduction, compatibility with video transmission/reproduction, and the like when the designated specific application is DLNA, for example.

[0109]

25 Other than the above, the specific application to be started may be designated in accordance with the type of information element in some classification process, for example. In this case, the subelement that designates the type of the specific application and triggers a start is
30 unnecessary.

[0110]

For example, the transmitting side (such as the first wireless communication device 100) transmits an action frame that includes such an information element and requests a start of a specific application to the receiving side (such as the second wireless communication device 200). Upon receipt of the action frame, the receiving side returns an action frame as a response including the corresponding information element (a response to the action frame requesting a start of a specific application). By transmitting/receiving an action frame in this manner, the intentions of the transmitting side and the receiving side can be matched, and a specific application can be automatically started at both sides. Accordingly, execution of a specific application can be started based on the control information in the L2 (second layer) link.

[0111]

Here, a role can be designated in a subelement in the information element in the response action frame before the response is returned. In a case where the role of the peer is designated as "server" in the request, the role of a client is preferably designated accordingly in a subelement in the information element in the response action frame to be returned.

[0112]

By another implementation method, a predetermined portion may be encapsulated as the vendor specific content (641) shown in Fig. 10. The predetermined portion to be encapsulated and transmitted is the frame body portion of an association request frame or an association response frame containing a specific information element. An example structure of the frame format according to this

implementation method is shown in Fig. 12.

[0113]

[Example structure of a frame format]

Fig. 12 is a diagram schematically showing an example
5 structure of the format of a frame to be transmitted/received
in a communication process between respective devices in an
embodiment of the present technique. Specifically, Fig. 12
shows an example case where association is used as the Vendor
Specific Content of the vendor specific action frame shown
10 in Fig. 10.

[0114]

Here, the Vendor Specific Content is preferably divided
into more than one portion, so as to indicate for what purpose
the vendor specific action frame is to be used, as in the
15 example illustrated in Fig. 11. For example, the Vendor
Specific Content is preferably divided into the portion of
vendor specific content type (672) and an information element
storage portion (673) encapsulating the frame that follows.
That is, the vendor specific content type (672) can indicate
20 for what purpose the vendor specific action frame is to be
used.

[0115]

In the embodiment of the present technique, the type
of each frame is supposedly written in the vendor specific
25 content type (672). The type may be the type of an action
frame formed by encapsulating an association request frame
for indicating to the peer a start of a specific application,
while there is a P2P L2 (second layer) link, for example.
Alternatively, the type may be the type of an action frame
30 formed by encapsulating an association response frame for
responding to the association request frame.

[0116]

The information element storage portion (673) that encapsulates a frame stores the body portion (675) of an association request frame or an association response frame
5 for responding to the association request frame.

[0117]

The format of the body portion (675) of an association request frame or an association response frame to be encapsulated has the same structure as the frame body shown
10 in Fig. 7. The format of the body portion (675) is equivalent to that shown in Fig. 11, and the information element for starting a specific application in the body portion (675) is also equivalent to that shown in Fig. 11. Therefore, detailed explanation of them is not repeated herein.

15 [0118]

As described above, an association request frame to which the information element for starting a specific application is added is encapsulated into an action frame, and are then transmitted to the peer. With that, a request
20 to start a specific application can be transmitted to the peer, while an existing L2 (second layer) link is maintained. Upon receipt of the request, the peer can encapsulate an association response frame to which the information element for starting the specific application is added into an action
25 frame, and return a response. With that, the intentions of the transmitting side and the receiving side can be matched, and a specific application can be automatically started at both sides. Accordingly, execution of a specific application can be started based on the control information
30 in an existing L2 (second layer) link.

[0119]

[Example communication when a specific application is started]

Fig. 13 is a sequence chart showing an example communication process to be performed by each device in an embodiment of the present technique. Fig. 13 illustrates an example communication process to be performed in a case where a specific application is started after a connection in the second layer.

[0120]

10 The sequence chart shown in Fig. 13 is a modification formed by partially modifying the sequence chart shown in Figs. 5 and 6, and therefore, explanation of the same aspects as those in Figs. 5 and 6 will not be made below. Specifically, in the communication process indicated by a rectangle 551, the respective procedures (501 through 512) shown in Figs. 15 5 and 6 are carried out.

[0121]

For example, as shown in Figs. 5 and 6, another application is executed after a L2 (second layer) link is established (551). After a L2 (second layer) link is established as above, a specific application is started by a packet exchange for a specific application start (552). In this packet exchange for a specific application start, each frame (action frame) shown in Figs. 10 through 12) is 25 transmitted/received. After the packet exchange for a specific application start, the actual data of a specific application can be transmitted (553).

[0122]

30 Compared with the example illustrated in Fig. 9, the respective procedures such as the temporary L2 (second layer) link cutoff (542) can be skipped. The procedures that can

be skipped are the second Device discovery and the second Service Discovery (optional), for example. Also, the procedures that can be skipped are the second Group Owner Negotiation, the second Association, the second secure link establishment, and the second IP address assignment, for example. As the procedures such as the temporal L2 (second layer) link cutoff (542) can be skipped, the next specific application can be started in a short period of time.

[0123]

10 Here, there might be a case where a necessary information exchange is not performed in the first device discovery (equivalent to 501 shown in Fig. 5) included in the packet exchange (501 through 512) portion shown in Fig. 13. In this case, it might not be possible to determine whether the peer is compatible with exchanges of vendor specific action frames. In this case, information indicating that received frames are not to be recognized can be transmitted to notify that the peer is not compatible with vendor specific action frames, for example. As specified in section 7.3.1.11 of the IEEE802.11-2007 specification, for example, "128" through "255" are designated in the category field in an action frame, and a received information element is added to the response to be returned. In this manner, a notification that the receiving side is not compatible with vendor specific action frames can be transmitted.

25 [0124]

Also, there might be a case where the receiving side can interpret the contents of a vendor specific action frame, but is not designed to start a designated specific application. In this case, a notification that the receiving side is not compatible can be transmitted by returning a response using

30

an error code defined as a vendor specific information element.

[0125]

Example cases where action frames are used within the
5 scope of the IEEE802.11-2007 specification have been
described as embodiments of the present technique. Here, GAS
(generic advertisement service) Public Action frames defined
in the IEEE802.11u specification might be used. In this case,
however, frames are not encrypted. Therefore, in cases where
10 information is exchanged between wireless communication
devices while a L2 (second layer) link is already established
and a secure link is also established, it is preferable to
use action frames.

[0126]

15 Also, in the stage of a packet exchange for establishing
a second-layer connection, transmission/reception of a
packet that contains an information element including
information other than necessary information might be
performed, as well as designation of the specific application
20 to be used after the second-layer connection, and adding of
the information necessary in using the specific application.
For example, a packet that contains an information element
including information indicating whether to start the
specific application might be transmitted/received. In this
25 case, a second-layer connection might be established with the
use of a packet containing an information element including
information indicating that the specific application is not
to be started. In this case, the specific application can
be started after the connection establishment, while the
30 second-layer connection is maintained with the use of a packet
that contains an information element including information

indicating that the specific application is to be started in the same information element. Accordingly, an embodiment of the present technique can be applied to such a case.

[0127]

5 [Example operation of a wireless communication device]

Figs. 14 through 16 show a flowchart of the procedures in an example communication process to be performed by the first wireless communication device 100 in an embodiment of the present technique.

10 [0128]

First, the correspondence relationship between the procedures shown in Figs. 14 through 16 and the respective procedures shown in Figs. 5, 6, 8, and 9 is described.

[0129]

15 Steps S901 through S905 correspond to 521 and 522 shown in Fig. 8. Steps S906 through S909 correspond to 523 shown in Fig. 8. Step S910 corresponds to 524 shown in Fig. 8. Steps S911 through S915 correspond to 527 and 531 shown in Fig. 8.

20 [0130]

Step S919 corresponds to 504 shown in Fig. 5. Steps S920 through S926 correspond to 507 through 512 shown in Figs. 5 and 6.

[0131]

25 Steps S927 through S933 and step S914 correspond to 552 shown in Fig. 13. Step S915 corresponds to 553 shown in Fig. 13.

[0132]

30 First, the control unit 140 conducts Device Discovery (step S901). The control unit 140 then determines whether an IE indicating specific application association

(equivalent to 610 shown in Fig. 7) is included in information from the peer device discovered through the Device Discovery (step S902). The information from the peer device is a Device Discovery request or a Device Discovery response. In a case
5 where an IE indicating specific application association is included (step S902), the control unit 140 records the discovered device as a peer associated with a specific application on a list (such as the peer list 180 shown in Fig. 3) (step S903). In a case where any IE indicating specific
10 application association is not included (step S902), the control unit 140 records the discovered device as a peer unassociated with a specific application on the list (such as the peer list 180 shown in Fig. 3) (step S904). In a case where an IE indicating specific application association is
15 included, for example, "associated" is recorded in the specific application association 184 in the peer list 180 shown in Fig. 3. In a case where any IE indicating specific application association is not included, "N/A" is recorded in the specific application association 184.

20 [0133]

The control unit 140 then determines whether all the peer devices discovered through the Device Discovery have been recorded on the list (step S905). In a case where not all the peer devices have been recorded, the control unit 140
25 returns to step S902. In a case where all the peer devices have been recorded on the list (step S905), the control unit 140 determines whether a peer designating operation has been performed by the user (step S906).

[0134]

30 In a case where any peer designating operation has not been performed by the user (step S906), the control unit 140

determines whether a connection request has been received from a peer device (step S907). In a case where any connection request has not been received from any peer device (step S907), the control unit 140 stands by (step S908), and returns to
5 step S901. In a case where a connection request has been received from a peer device (step S907), the control unit 140 moves on to step S909.

[0135]

In a case where a peer designating operation has been
10 performed by the user (step S906) or where a connection request has been received from a peer device (step S907), the control unit 140 determines whether a specific application has been designated thereby (step S909). For example, on the connection detail select screen 190 shown in Fig. 4, the user
15 performs a peer designating operation or a specific application designating operation. Also, a check is made to determine whether a specific application has been designated based on the information contained in the connection request received from a peer device.

20 [0136]

In a case where a specific application has been designated (step S909), the control unit 140 adds the specific application association IE, and conducts Group Owner
Negotiation (step S910). Through the Group Owner
25 Negotiation, the first wireless communication device 100 becomes a GO (Group Owner) or a client.

[0137]

The control unit 140 then adds the specific application association IE, conducts Association, and establishes a
30 connection in the second layer (step S911). The control unit 140 then conducts Secure link establishment (step S912) and

IP Address Assignment (step S913).

[0138]

The control unit 140 then causes the specific application to automatically start in accordance with the information in the specific application association IE (step S914), and executes the specific application (step S915). The control unit 140 then determines whether a second-layer cutoff request has been received from the user or the peer (step S916). In a case where any second-layer cutoff request has not been received, the monitoring is continued. In a case where a second-layer cutoff request has been received (step S916), on the other hand, the control unit 140 performs a specific application end process (step S917), and performs a second-layer cutoff process (step S918), to end the communication process.

[0139]

In a case where any specific application has not been designated (step S909), the control unit 140 conducts Group Owner Negotiation without addition of the specific application association IE (step S919). Through the Group Owner Negotiation, the first wireless communication device 100 becomes a GO (Group Owner) or a client.

[0140]

The control unit 140 then conducts Association and establishes a connection in the second layer without addition of the specific application association IE (step S920). The control unit 140 then conducts Secure link establishment (step S921) and IP Address Assignment (step S922).

[0141]

The control unit 140 then checks associated applications by SSDP, and conducts L4 setup (step S923). The

control unit 140 then determines whether an application start instruction has been received from the user or the peer (step S924). In a case where any application start instruction has not been received, the monitoring is continued. In a case
 5 where an application start instruction has been received (step S924), on the other hand, the control unit 140 starts an application in accordance with the application start instruction (step S925), and executes the application (step S926).

10 [0142]

The control unit 140 then determines whether a specific application start instruction has been received from the user (step S927). In a case where a specific application start instruction has been received, the control unit 140 suspends
 15 the application being currently executed (step S928). The control unit 140 then transmits the Vendor Specific Action frame of an application start trigger request including the specific application association IE to the peer (step S929). The control unit 140 then receives the Vendor Specific Action
 20 frame of an application start trigger response including the specific application association IE from the peer (step S930).

[0143]

Here, the Vendor Specific Action frame is the Action
 25 frame shown in Figs. 10 through 12, and contains the vendor specific IE (the specific application association IE).

[0144]

The control unit 140 then causes the specific
 application to automatically start in accordance with the
 30 information in the specific application association IE (step S914), and executes the specific application (step S915).

[0145]

In a case where any specific application start instruction has not been received (step S927), the control unit 140 determines whether the Vendor Specific Action frame of an application start trigger request containing the specific application association IE has been received (step S931). In a case where the Action frame has been received (step S931), the control unit 140 transmits the Vendor Specific Action frame of an application start trigger response including the specific application association IE to the peer (step S932). The control unit 140 then suspends the application being executed (step S933), and moves on to step S914.

[0146]

In a case where the Action frame has not been received (step S931), the control unit 140 determines whether a second-layer cutoff request has been received from the user or the peer (step S934). In a case where any second-layer cutoff request has not been received (step S934), the control unit 140 returns to step S927, and continues the monitoring. In a case where a second-layer cutoff request has been received (step S934), on the other hand, the control unit 140 performs an application end process (step S935), and performs a second-layer cutoff process (step S936), to end the communication process.

[0147]

Step S901 is an example of the first procedure disclosed in a claim. Steps S910 through S915 are an example of the second procedure disclosed in the claim. Steps S927 through S933 are an example of the third procedure disclosed in the claim.

[0148]

As described above, the control unit 140 performs control to designate a specific application in a case where any specific application is not designated at the time of an establishment process to establish a wireless connection (a connection in the second layer), and a specific application is designated after establishment of a wireless connection. In this case, the control unit 140 performs control to designate a specific application by transmitting/receiving data including information (shown in Figs. 10 through 12) equivalent to the information element (shown in Fig. 7) for designating the specific application without cutoff of the wireless connection. The control unit 140 also transmits/receives an encrypted frame as data including the information equivalent to the information element.

[0149]

For example, in a case where a specific application is designated by a user operation after a wireless connection is established, the control unit 140 transmits data including the information equivalent to the information element for designating a start of the specific application without cutoff of the wireless connection. By this transmission, the specific application is designated. On the other hand, there is a case where data including the information equivalent to the information element for designating a specific application is received from a wirelessly-connected wireless communication device (such as the second wireless communication device 200) after a wireless connection is established. In this case, the control unit 140 transmits data including the information equivalent to the information element for designating a start of the specific application,

as a response to the data, to the wireless communication device (such as the second wireless communication device 200) without cutoff of the wireless connection. By this transmission, the specific application is designated.

5 [0150]

Specifically, the control unit 140 transmits/receives a vendor specific action frame specified in the IEEE802.11 specification as the data including the information equivalent to the information element, for example. In this case, the control unit 140 transmits a vendor specific action frame that is a request frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element. Also, the control unit 140 transmits a vendor specific action frame that is a response frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element.

15

[0151]

The control unit 140 also encapsulates the association request frame body containing the information element into a vendor specific action frame to be transmitted. This association request frame body has a vendor specific Information Element used as the information element, and contains the information element.

20

[0152]

The control unit 140 also encapsulates the association response frame body containing the information element into a vendor specific action frame to be transmitted. This association response frame body has a vendor specific Information Element used as the information element, and contains the information element.

25

30 [0153]

In a case where a specific application that has not been

designated at the time of an establishment process to establish a wireless connection is newly designated after the wireless connection is established, the control unit 140 may perform control to designate the new specific application.

5 [0154]

As described above, in an embodiment of the present technique, a specific application can be designated at the time of device discovery or service discovery conducted before a connection is established in the second layer. Even
10 in a case where any specific application is not designated at the time of device discovery or service discovery, a frame including a predetermined information element can be transmitted after a connection is established in the second layer. The predetermined information element may be an
15 information element to be transmitted/received at the time of device discovery or service discovery. With this, a specific application to be used after a connection in the second layer can be newly designated and started, without cutoff of the connection in the second layer. That is, a user
20 can readily use a desired application.

[0155]

For example, it is possible to switch to a specific application while maintaining a Wi-Fi Direct connection. Specifically, even in a case where switching to a specific
25 application is performed after a connection in the second layer, cutoff of the connection in the second layer and reconnection in the second layer can be skipped. With this, the trouble the use needs to take and the waiting time of the user can be reduced. Also, the number of packets required
30 in operation can be reduced, and congestion in wireless communication channels can be relieved.

[0156]

Also, in an embodiment of the present technique, information necessary for starting a specific application is exchanged by using action frames that are used on a one-to-one basis. As the action frames can be encrypted, resistance to attacks from others can be increased, which is preferable in terms of security.

[0157]

The above described embodiments are merely examples for embodying the present technique, and the items in the embodiments correspond to the items of the subject matter in the claims. Likewise, the items of the subject matter in the claims correspond to the items with the same names in the embodiments of the present technique. However, the present technique is not limited to the embodiments, and more specific embodiments can be formed by making various changes to the embodiments without departing from the scope thereof.

[0158]

The processing procedures described above in the embodiments may be regarded as a method including the series of procedures, or may be regarded as a program for causing a computer to carry out the series of procedures or a recording medium storing the program. The recording medium may be a CD (Compact Disc), an MD (Mini Disc), a DVD (Digital Versatile Disk), a memory card, or a Blu-ray Disc (a registered trade name), for example.

[0159]

The present technique may also be embodied in the structures described below.

(1) A wireless communication device including:
a communication unit that performs a connected device

discovery process before a wireless connection is established,
and performs an establishment process to establish the
wireless connection by transmitting/receiving data
including an information element for designating a specific
5 application when the connected device discovered through the
connected device discovery process is determined to be
associated with the specific application; and

a control unit that performs control to designate the
specific application by transmitting/receiving data
10 including information equivalent to the information element
without cutoff of the wireless connection when the specific
application is designated after the wireless connection is
established as the specific application is not designated at
the time of the establishment process.

15 (2) The wireless communication device of (1), wherein,
when the specific application is designated by a user
operation after the wireless connection is established as the
specific application is not designated at the time of the
establishment process, the control unit performs the control
20 to designate the specific application by transmitting the
data including the information equivalent to the information
element without cutoff of the wireless connection.

(3) The wireless communication device of (1) or (2),
wherein, when receiving the data including the information
25 equivalent to the information element from the
wirelessly-connected wireless communication device after
the wireless connection is established as the specific
application is not designated at the time of the establishment
process, the control unit performs the control to designate
30 the specific application by transmitting the data including
the information equivalent to the information element as a

response to the received data to the wirelessly-connected wireless communication device without cutoff of the wireless connection.

(4) The wireless communication device of any of (1) through (3), wherein the control unit transmits/receives a vendor specific action frame specified in the IEEE802.11 specification as the data including the information equivalent to the information element.

(5) The wireless communication device of (4), wherein the control unit transmits a request frame as the vendor specific action frame, the request frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying the role the wireless communication device transmitting the request frame is to play in the specific application.

(6) The wireless communication device of (4) or (5), wherein the control unit transmits a response frame as the vendor specific action frame, the response frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying the role the wireless communication device transmitting the response frame in response to a request frame is to play in the specific application.

(7) The wireless communication device of (4), wherein the control unit encapsulates and transmits an association request frame body into the vendor specific action frame, the association request frame body using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be

started and information for specifying the role the wireless communication device transmitting a request frame is to play in the specific application, the association request frame body containing the information element.

5 (8) The wireless communication device of (4) or (7), wherein the control unit encapsulates and transmits an association response frame body into the vendor specific action frame, the association response frame body using a vendor specific Information Element as the information
10 element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying the role the wireless communication device transmitting a response frame in response to a request frame is to play in the specific application, the association response frame body
15 containing the information element.

 (9) The wireless communication device of any of (1) through (8), wherein the control unit has an encrypted frame transmitted/received as the data including the information equivalent to the information element.

20 (10) The wireless communication device of any of (1) through (9), wherein the communication unit establishes a connection in a second layer as the wireless connection.

 (11) The wireless communication device of any of (1) through (10), wherein the communication unit performs the
25 connected device discovery process by transmitting/receiving one of a Probe Request and a Probe Response specified in the IEEE802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe
30 Response.

 (12) The wireless communication device of any of (1)

through (11), which is compliant with the IEEE802.11 specification for enabling P2P (Peer to Peer) connections.

(13) A communication system including a first wireless communication device and a second wireless communication device that perform a connected device discovery process on each other before a wireless connection is established, and perform an establishment process to establish the wireless connection by transmitting and receiving, to and from each other, data including an information element for designating a specific application when the connected device discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with the specific application,

wherein, when the specific application is designated after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process, the first wireless communication device and the second wireless communication device transmit and receive, to and from each other, data including information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection.

(14) A communication method including:

a first procedure to perform a connected device discovery process before a wireless connection is established;

a second procedure to perform an establishment process to establish the wireless connection by transmitting/receiving data including an information element for designating a specific application when the connected device discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with the specific application; and

a third procedure to perform control to designate the specific application by transmitting/receiving data including information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection when the specific application is designated after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

- 10 [0160]
- 10 Communication system
- 100 First wireless communication device
- 101 Antenna
- 110 Data processing unit
- 15 120 Transmission processing unit
- 130 Wireless interface unit
- 140 Control unit
- 150 Memory
- 160 Operation accepting unit
- 20 170 Display Unit
- 200 Second wireless communication device
- 300 Third wireless communication device
- 400 Fourth wireless communication device

CLAIMS

1. A wireless communication device comprising:

a communication unit configured to perform a connected device discovery process before a wireless connection is established by transmitting/receiving one of a Probe Request and a Probe Response specified in IEEE 802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe Response, and perform an establishment process to establish the wireless connection by transmitting/receiving data including an information element for designating the specific application when a connected device discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with the specific application; and

a control unit configured to perform control to designate the specific application by transmitting/receiving data including information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection when the specific application is designated after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process.

2. The wireless communication device according to claim 1, wherein when the specific application by a user operation after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process, the control unit performs the control to designate the specific application by transmitting the data including the information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection.

3. The wireless communication device according to claim 1, wherein the control unit is configured to receive the data including the information equivalent to the information element from a

wireless communication device with which the wireless connection is established after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process, and configured to perform control to designate the specific application by transmitting the data including the information equivalent to the information element as a response to the received data to the wireless communication device with which the wireless connection is established without cutoff of the wireless connection.

4. The wireless communication device according to claim 1, wherein the control unit is configured to transmit/receive a vendor specific action frame specified in the IEEE 802.11 specification as the data including the information equivalent to the information element.

5. The wireless communication device according to claim 4, wherein the control unit is configured to transmit a request frame as the vendor specific action frame, the request frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying a role the wireless communication device transmitting the request frame is to play in the specific application.

6. The wireless communication device according to claim 4, wherein the control unit is configured to transmit a response frame as the vendor specific action frame, the response frame using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying a role the wireless communication device transmitting the response frame in response to a request frame is to play in the specific application.

7. The wireless communication device according to claim 4, wherein the control unit is configured to encapsulate and transmit an association request frame body into the vendor specific action frame, the association request frame body using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying a role the wireless communication device transmitting a request frame is to play in the specific application, the association request frame body containing the information element.

8. The wireless communication device according to claim 4, wherein the control unit is configured to encapsulate and transmit an association response frame body into the vendor specific action frame, the association response frame body using a vendor specific Information Element as the information element including information for identifying the specific application to be started and information for specifying a role the wireless communication device transmitting a response frame in response to a request frame is to play in the specific application, the association response frame body containing the information element.

9. The wireless communication device according to claim 1, wherein the control unit is further configured to transmit/receive an encrypted frame as the data including information element.

10. The wireless communication device according to claim 1, wherein the communication unit is configured to establish a connection as the wireless connection to use the specific application.

11. The wireless communication device according to claim 1, which is compliant with IEEE 802.11 specification for enabling Peer to Peer connections.

12. A communication system comprising a first wireless communication device and a second wireless communication device configured to perform a connected device discovery process on each other before a wireless connection is established by being configured to transmit/receive one of a Probe Request and a Probe Response specified in IEEE 802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe Response, and to perform an establishment process to establish the wireless connection by being configured to transmit and receive, to and from each other, data including an information element for designating the specific application when a connected device discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with the specific application,

wherein, when the specific application is designated after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process, the first wireless communication device and the second wireless communication device are configured to transmit and receive, to and from each other, data including information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection.

13. A communication method comprising:

a first procedure to perform a connected device discovery process before a wireless connection is established by transmitting/receiving one of a Probe Request and a Probe Response specified in IEEE 802.11 specification, with information indicating an associated specific application being added to the one of the Probe Request and the Probe Response;

a second procedure to perform an establishment process to establish the wireless connection by transmitting/receiving data including an information element for designating the specific application when a connected device discovered through the connected device discovery process is determined to be associated with the specific application; and

a third procedure to perform control to designate the specific application by transmitting/receiving data including information equivalent to the information element without cutoff of the wireless connection when the specific application is designated after the wireless connection is established as the specific application is not designated at the time of the establishment process.