

Sharing Wireless Internet in Urban Neighbourhoods

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Abstract:

Recently, personal and community-wide wireless Internet networks have been receiving a lot of attention for their potential opportunities. Many of these opportunities stem from sharing connections to the Internet. However, while many benefits are claimed for these services, such as broader coverage, improved access, and lower cost, relatively little is known about how people regard sharing wireless Internet services. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this research investigated the range of attitudes towards such sharing among urban wireless users. Our research revealed generally positive feelings about the benefits of sharing, especially when using others' signals, but serious reservations about making signals open for use by strangers. These findings have implications for developing both community-wide infrastructure and local, ad hoc systems. They also provide the basis for several design features that would promote sharing, including security measures, privacy protection, cost reduction, bandwidth prioritization, and reciprocal notification.