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WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICE, WIRELESS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM, AND WIRELESS COMMUNICATION METHOD

Abstract

A wireless communication device including: a transmitter unit configured to transmit an RTS (Request To Send) packet to a plurality of wireless communication devices; a receiver unit configured to receive a CTS (Clear To Send) packet responding to the RTS packet; and a data processing unit configured to transmit data packets from the transmitter unit to the plurality of wireless communication devices when the CTS packet is received by the receiver unit from at least some of the plurality of wireless communication devices.

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Background/Summary

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION [0001] The present application is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 18/326,395, filed May 31, 2023, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/451,737, filed Oct. 21, 2021, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,700,640, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/667,287, filed Oct. 29, 2019, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,172,507, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/384,397, filed Dec. 20, 2016, now U.S. Pat. No. 10,485,026, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/579,185, filed Aug. 15, 2012, now U.S. Pat. No. 9,554,400, which is a National Stage of PCT/JP2011/053711, filed Feb. 21, 2011, and claims the benefit of priority from prior Japanese Priority Patent Application JP 2010-049410 filed in the Japan Patent Office on Mar. 5, 2010, the entire content of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates to a wireless communication device, a wireless communication system, and a wireless communication method and program.

BACKGROUND ART

[0003] In recent years, a wireless LAN (Local Area Network) system, which is typified by IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) 802.11, has come into wide use instead of a wired network owing to advantages of a high degree of freedom of equipment and the like. For example, IEEE 802.11a/g has come into wide use and IEEE 802.11n is expected to become widely available in the future.

[0004] Currently, IEEE 802.11ac is supposed to be employed as a next-generation wireless LAN standard. The IEEE 802.11ac is expected to employ SDMA (Space Division Multiple Access) in which wireless resources on a spatial axis are shared among a plurality of users. SDMA enables simultaneous one-to-many communications using the same frequency, which makes it possible to seek a significant improvement of the transmission rate.

[0005] A fair number of wireless LAN systems avoid interference between wireless communication devices by access control based on carrier sense, such as CSMA/CA (Carrier Sense Multiple Access with Collision Avoidance).

[0006] For example, a wireless communication device performing data transmission transmits an RTS (Request To Send) packet and initiates transmission of a data packet upon receipt of a CTS (Clear To Send) packet from a wireless communication device of a transmission destination. Further, a wireless communication device having received at least one of RTS and CTS packets

which are not destined for its own station sets NAV (Network Allocation Vector) based on duration information contained in the received packet to avoid interference. The interference avoidance based on the duration information is described in, for example, the following patent literature 1.

CITATION LIST

Patent Literature

[0007] Patent Literature 1: JP 2008-252867A

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

Technical Problem

[0008] According to a simple combination of the IEEE 802.11ac and RTS/CTS, a plurality of wireless communication devices simultaneously transmit CTS packets in response to an RTS packet transmitted by an access point. On this account, there has been a problem in that it is difficult for the access point to determine from which wireless communication device the CTS packet has been transmitted and to determine a transmission destination of a data packet.

[0009] In view of the foregoing problem, the present invention is directed to a new, improved wireless communication device, wireless communication system, and wireless communication method and program, capable of transmitting data packets without specifying a transmission source device of a CTS packet.

Solution to Problem

[0010] According to an aspect of the present invention in order to solve the above-mentioned problem, there is provided a wireless communication device including: a transmitter unit configured to transmit an RTS (Request To Send) packet to a plurality of wireless communication devices; a receiver unit configured to receive a CTS (Clear To Send) packet responding to the RTS packet; and a data processing unit configured to transmit data packets from the transmitter unit to the plurality of wireless communication devices when the CTS packet is received by the receiver unit from at least some of the plurality of wireless communication devices.

[0011] Each of data packets to the plurality of wireless communication devices may include timing information designating a transmission timing of an ACK packet from a wireless communication device at a transmission destination with respect to the data packet.

[0012] The data processing unit may set the timing information such that transmission timings of the ACK packet from each of the plurality of wireless communication devices are different from each other.

[0013] The data processing unit may set the timing information such that ACK packets transmitted from each of the plurality of wireless communication devices do not overlap each other on a time axis.

[0014] The transmitter unit may transmit the data packets to the plurality of wireless communication units by SDMA (Space Division Multiple Access).

[0015] According to another aspect of the present invention in order to achieve the above-mentioned object, there is provided a wireless communication system including: a plurality of first wireless communication devices; and a second wireless communication device including: a transmitter unit configured to transmit an RTS (Request To Send) packet to the plurality of first wireless communication devices; a receiver unit configured to receive a CTS (Clear To Send) packet responding to the RTS packet; and a data processing unit configured to transmit data packets from the transmitter unit to the plurality of first wireless communication devices when the CTS packet is received by the receiver unit from at least some of the plurality of first wireless communication devices.

[0016] Two or more first wireless communication devices having received the RTS packet may transmit the same CTS at a timing according to an identical criterion.

[0017] Each of data packets to the plurality of wireless communication devices may include timing information designating a transmission timing of an ACK packet from a wireless communication device at a transmission destination with respect to the data packet, and each of the plurality of

wireless communication devices may transmit the ACK packet at a timing designated by the timing information.

[0018] According to another aspect of the present invention in order to solve the above-mentioned problem, there is provided a wireless communication method including: transmitting an RTS (Request To Send) packet to a plurality of wireless communication devices; receiving a CTS (Clear To Send) packet responding to the RTS packet; and transmitting data packets to the plurality of wireless communication devices when the CTS packet is received from at least some of the plurality of wireless communication devices.

[0019] According to another aspect of the present invention in order to solve the above-mentioned problem, there is provided a program configured for a computer to implement functions of: a transmitter unit configured to transmit an RTS (Request To Send) packet to a plurality of wireless communication devices; a receiver unit configured to receive a CTS (Clear To Send) packet responding to the RTS packet; and a data processing unit configured to transmit data packets from the transmitter unit to the plurality of wireless communication devices when the CTS packet is received by the receiver unit from at least some of the plurality of wireless communication devices.

Advantageous Effects of Invention

[0020] As described above, according to the present invention, it is possible to transmit data packets without specifying a transmission source device of a CTS packet.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0021] FIG. 1 is an explanatory diagram illustrating a structure of a wireless communication system 1 according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0022] FIG. 2 is an explanatory diagram illustrating RTS/CTS handshake in a wireless communication system according to a comparative example.

[0023] FIG. 3 is an explanatory diagram illustrating RTS/CTS handshake in a wireless communication system according to a comparative example.

[0024] FIG. 4 is an explanatory diagram illustrating a structure of a wireless communication device, such as an access point 10 or a station 20, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0025] FIG. 5 is an explanatory diagram illustrating access control according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0026] FIG. 6 is an explanatory diagram illustrating a structure of a multi-RTS packet.

[0027] FIG. 7 is an explanatory diagram illustrating access control according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0028] FIG. 8 is an explanatory diagram illustrating transmission in a multi-path environment.

[0029] FIG. 9 is an explanatory diagram illustrating a first modified example of offset information.

[0030] FIG. 10 is an explanatory diagram illustrating a second modified example of offset information.

[0031] FIG. 11 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of an access point according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0032] FIG. 12 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of a station according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

[0033] Hereinafter, preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the appended drawings. Note that, in this specification and the drawings, elements that have substantially the same function and structure are denoted with the same reference signs, and repeated explanation is omitted.

[0034] In the present specification and drawings, a plurality of elements that have substantially the same function and structure may be denoted by the same reference sign followed by different numbers. For example, a plurality of elements that have substantially the same function and structure may be denoted by stations **20 #1**, **20 #2** and **20 #3** or branches **40-1**, **40-2** and **40-N**. However, if a plurality of elements that have substantially the same function and structure do not have to be differently denoted, the plurality of elements are only denoted by the same sign. For example, if the stations **20 #1**, **20 #2** and **20 #3** do not have to be differently denoted, the stations are denoted by the same reference sign, i.e., **20**.

[0035] Description of Embodiments will be described in order of the following items:

1. Structure of Wireless Communication System
2. Structure of Wireless Communication Device
3. Method of Access Control
4. Operation of Wireless Communication Device
(Operation of Access Point)
(Operation of Station)
5. Conclusion

1. Structure of Wireless Communication System

[0036] Firstly, a structure of a wireless communication system **1** according to an embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to FIG. **1**.

[0037] FIG. **1** is an explanatory diagram illustrating a structure of a wireless communication system **1** according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. **1**, the wireless communication system **1** includes an access point **10**, stations **20 #1~20 #3**, and neighboring wireless devices **30 #1~30 #4**.

[0038] The stations **20 #1~20 #3** are located within communication coverage of the access point **10**, while the access point **10** is located within communication coverage of the stations **20 #1~20 #3**. On this account, the stations **20 #1~20 #3** may establish a direct communication with the access point **10**. That is, the stations **20 #1~20 #3** fall within the coverage of the access point **10**, and a plurality of wireless communication devices made up of the stations **20 #1~20 #3** and the access point **10** constitute a communication group **1** (BSS: Basic Service Set).

[0039] The access point **10** is a wireless communication device conforming to, for example, IEEE 802.11ac and performs SDMA (Space Division Multiple Access) by means of an adaptive array antenna. Specifically, the access point **10** establishes a one-to-many communication by multiplexing packets transmitted to a plurality of stations **20** with respect to the same time axis and the same frequency band or by separating packets, which are transmitted from a plurality of stations **20** through the same time axis and the same frequency band, by transmission sources. Further, the access point **10** may establish a one-to-one communication with each of the stations **20**.

[0040] Like the access point **10**, the station **20** is also a wireless communication device conforming to, for example, IEEE 802.11ac and performs SDMA (Space Division Multiple Access) by means of an adaptive array antenna. However, the station **20** may include fewer antennas than the access point **10** since the station **20** performs separation of packets upon receipt of the packets but does not perform multiplexing of packets to be transmitted. Some of the stations **20 #1~20 #3** may be a wireless communication device conforming to a traditional standard, such as IEEE 802.11a/g.

[0041] It may be determined upon manufacturing a wireless communication device or by negotiation upon processing a connection of a wireless communication device whether the wireless communication device will operate as the access point **20** (Group Owner) or the station **10** (Client).

[0042] The wireless communication device, such as the access point **10** and the station **20**, is not limited to any specific hardware type. For example, the wireless communication device, such as the access point **10** and the station **20**, may be an information processing device, such as a PC (Personal Computer), a household image processing device (e.g., a DVD recorder, a video deck, or the like), a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant), a household game machine, or a household appliance.

Further, the wireless communication device, such as the access point **10** and the station **20**, may be an information processing device, such as a mobile phone, a PHS (Personal Handyphone System), a portable music player, a portable image processing device, or a portable game machine.

[0043] For the wireless communication system **1**, RTS/CTS handshake may be used to prevent interference between communication by the access point **10** and the station **20** and communication by the neighboring wireless devices **30** #**1**~**30** #**4**. However, the following problems, which will be described with reference to FIGS. **2** and **3**, may arise depending on the arrangement format of the wireless communication system **1** and the RTS/CTS handshake.

[0044] FIGS. **2** and **3** are explanatory diagrams illustrating RTS/CTS handshake in a wireless communication system according to comparative examples. In the example shown in FIG. **2**, the plurality of stations #**1**~**3** transmit CTS packets at the same time with respect to an RTS packet transmitted by the access point. In this case, each of the stations transmits a CTS packet with an orthogonal training field added so that the access point may detect from which station each of the CTS packets has been transmitted.

[0045] According to IEEE 802.11, however, SIFS (Short Interframe Space), which is a packet transmission interval, has an allowable error of $\pm 10\%$. On this account, the transmission timings of the CTS packets by the stations #**1**~**3** may deviate from each other by up to 20%. Consequently, since the orthogonality of the training field which is added to each of the CTS packets by each of the stations may be removed, it is difficult to detect from which wireless communication device the CTS packet has been transmitted and to determine a transmission destination of a data packet.

[0046] In the example shown in FIG. **3**, the plurality of stations #**1**~**3** disperse the CTS packets in time and transmit the dispersed CTS packets with respect to the RTS packet which has been transmitted by the access point. On this account, the access point may specify a transmission source station of each of the CTS packets based on the reception timing of each of the CTS packets. In the example shown in FIG. **3**, however, since each of the stations disperses the CTS packets in time and transmits the dispersed CTS packets, overhead increases.

[0047] In view of the foregoing situation, the embodiments of the present invention have been conceived. According to the embodiments of the present invention, it is possible to transmit a data packet without specifying a transmission source device of a CTS packet. The embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail.

2. Structure of Wireless Communication Device

[0048] FIG. **4** is an explanatory diagram illustrating a structure of a wireless communication device, such as the access point **10** or the station **20**, according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. **4**, the wireless communication device includes N sets of branches **40-1**~**40-N** and a data processing unit **48**. Each of the branches **40** includes an antenna element **42**, a receiver unit **44**, and a transmitter unit **46**.

[0049] That is, the wireless communication device includes N antenna elements **42-1**~**42-N** and may function the N antenna elements **42-1**~**42-N** as adaptive array antennas by multiplying communication packets by each of the antenna elements **42** by appropriate weights. The wireless communication device operating as the access point **10** may increase the number of stations which can establish a simultaneous communication by SDMA by including more antenna elements **42**.

[0050] The data processing unit **48** generates transmission packets and distributes the transmission packets to the branches **42-1**~**42-N** in response to the transmission request of an upper-layer application. More specifically, the data processing unit **48** of the wireless communication device operating as the access point **10** generates transmission packets for each of the stations **20** and multiplies each of the transmission packets by a transmission weight for an adaptive array antenna of each of the branches **42**. The data processing unit **48** supplies the transmission packets, which have been spatially separated for each destination due to the multiplication, to the branches **42-1**~**42-N** as digital baseband signals.

[0051] The data processing unit **48** may learn a weight for an adaptive array antenna by applying

an adaptive algorithm, such as RLS (Recursive Least Square), to a training field which is a known sequence received from a destination device.

[0052] If the digital baseband signal is supplied from the data processing unit **25**, each of the transmitter units **46-1~46-N** performs signal processing, such as encoding or modulating, on the digital baseband signal. Further, each of the transmitter units **46-1~46-N** performs D/A conversion and upconversion of the digital baseband signal and supplies an analog high-frequency signal to the antenna elements **42-1~42-N**. The antenna elements **42-1~42-N** transmit the high-frequency signal, which is supplied from the transmitter units **46-1~46-N**, as a wireless signal.

[0053] If the high-frequency signal received by the antenna elements **42-1~42-N** is supplied, each of the receiver units **44-1~44-N** performs downconversion and A/D conversion of the high-frequency signal. Further, each of the receiver units **44-1~44-N** performs signal processing, such as demodulation or combining, on the baseband signal which has been subjected to the A/D conversion, and supplies the signal-processed baseband signal to the data processing unit **48**.

[0054] The data processing unit **48** multiplies the baseband signal supplied from the receiver units **44-1~44-N** by a reception weight for an adaptive array antenna. The data processing unit **48** supplies a transmission packet allocated for its own device among the transmission packets, which have been spatially separated by the multiplication, to an upper-layer application. If the wireless communication device employs a MIMO technique, the spatial separation may include separation of spatially multiplexed MIMO channels in addition to separation of transmission packets for each destination.

[0055] The data processing unit **48** performs processing of communication protocol on a MAC (Media Access Control) layer when communication by the branches **40-1~40-N** is performed. Specifically, the data processing unit **48** performs access control by performing generation of packets for RTS/CTS handshake (e.g., multi-RTS, CTS, data packet, ACK, etc. which will be described), transmission instruction or the like. The access control according to an embodiment of the present invention using the RTS/CTS handshake will be described.

3. Method of Access Control

[0056] FIG. **5** is an explanatory diagram illustrating access control according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. **5**, the access point **10**, which wishes to transmit data to the stations **20 #1~20 #3**, transmits a multi-RTS packet as a transmission request packet.

[0057] FIG. **6** is an explanatory diagram illustrating a structure of a multi-RTS packet. As shown in FIG. **6**, the multi-RTS packet includes a header and a payload. The payload includes address information of the stations **20 #1~20 #3** to which the access point **10** wishes to transmit data packets. In other words, the access point **10** performs a transmission request to the stations **20 #1~#3** by recording the address information of the stations **20 #1~#3** on the multi-RTS packet.

[0058] If the stations **20 #1~#3** receive the multi-RTS packet containing the address information of their own devices, the stations **20 #1~#3** transmit CTS (Clear To Send) packets to the access point **10** according to the same criterion SIFS. As a result, the CTS packets are almost simultaneously transmitted from the stations **20 #1~#3**.

[0059] On this account, it is difficult for the access point **10** to determine from which station **20** the CTS packet has been transmitted. However, if it is eventually determined that the data packet has normally been received by each of the stations **20**, a benefit of determining a transmission source station of each of the CTS packets may be considered as insignificant. That is because although the data packet is not transmitted to a station **20** which cannot be confirmed as a transmission source station of a CTS packet, an effect on the time taken in data transmission to another station may be considered as insignificant if SDMA is used.

[0060] In a situation where a CTS packet cannot be received from the station **20 #1** as shown in FIG. **7**, the neighboring wireless device **30 #1** may make a transmission reservation. However, since the station **20 #1** belongs to the access point **10**, a data transmission destination from the neighboring wireless device **30 #1** may not be considered the station **20 #1**. In this case, although

the access point **10** transmits a data packet to the station **20 #1** as shown in FIG. 7, the transmission of the data packet will not hinder the communication of the station **20 #1**.

[0061] The access point **10** according to an embodiment of the present invention spatially multiplexes the data packets (DATA #1~DATA #3) and transmits the spatially multiplexed data packets to all of the stations **20 #1~#3**, which are designated in the multi-RTS packet, without determining transmission source stations of CTS packets. However, the access point **10** needs to determine whether or not the stations **20 #1~#3** have normally received the data packets. On this account, the access point **10** disperses transmission of ACK packets from the stations **20 #1~#3** in time, thereby correctly determining a transmission source station of each of the ACK packets.

[0062] Specifically, as shown in FIG. 5, the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** sets offset information for the data packets (DATA #1~DATA #3) for each of the stations **20**.

[0063] The offset information refers to timing information which designates the transmission timing of an ACK packet from the station **20**. More specifically, if the lengths of time of data packets for each of the stations **20** are identical to each other as shown in FIG. 5, the offset information may be information indicating the elapsed period of time from the end of reception of the data packet. Alternatively, the offset information may be information indicating the time to transmit an ACK packet or information indicating the transmission order of the ACK packet.

[0064] The data processing unit **48** of the stations **20 #1~#3** checks offset information which is set for the data packet for each of the stations and, as shown in FIG. 5, transmits the ACK packet from each of the branches **40** at the transmission timings which are designated by the offset information.

[0065] Specifically, the station **20 #1** checks the offset information #1 which is set for the data packet (DATA #1), and initiates the transmission of the ACK packet after a period of time corresponding to the offset information #1 is elapsed from the end of reception of the data packet. Likewise, the station **20 #2** initiates the transmission of the ACK packet after a period of time indicated by the offset information #2 is elapsed from the end of reception of the data packet (DATA #2), and the station **20 #3** initiates the transmission of the ACK packet after a period of time indicated by the offset information #3 is elapsed from the end of reception of the data packet (DATA #3).

[0066] As such, the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** sets the offset information such that the transmission timings of the ACK packets from the stations **20 #1~#3** do not overlap each other on the time axis. More specifically, the data processing unit **48** may set offset information such that the transmission timings of the ACK packets do not overlap each other on the time axis even in the case of a maximum error of SIFS by taking into account an allowable error of SIFS (+ -10%) according to IEEE 802.11.

[0067] By means of such a structure, the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** may determine a transmission source station **20** of an ACK packet based on the offset information set for each of the stations **20** and the reception timing of the ACK packet. For example, the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** may determine a station **20**, which has offset information set to correspond to the reception timing of an ACK packet, as a transmission source station of the ACK packet.

[0068] On the other hand, according to the above-mentioned access control method, since the CTS packets are simultaneously transmitted from the plurality of stations **20** as described above, it becomes a problem whether or not the neighboring wireless device **30** may normally receive the CTS packet and set NAV. For example, if the neighboring wireless device **30 #4** does not normally receive a CTS packet when the station **20 #1** and the station **20 #3** transmit the CTS packet at the same time, the neighboring wireless device **30 #4** hinders the communication by the access point **10**.

[0069] A great number of wireless communication devices conforming to IEEE 802.11 or the like insert a guard interval into each OFDM symbol taking into account a multi-path environment as shown in FIG. 8. On this account, a wireless communication device at a receiving party may

normally receive a signal which is deviated with respect to time within a predetermined range.
[0070] In order to solve the foregoing problem, in the embodiment of the present invention, each of the stations **20** transmits the same CTS packet rather than a CTS packet with an orthogonal training field added as shown in FIG. **2**. By means of such a configuration, the neighboring wireless device **30 #4** may normally receive CTS packets, which are transmitted from different stations **20 #1** and **20 #3**, as CTS packets which arrive from the same transmission source at different timings under a multi-path environment, and set NAV.

(Modified Examples of Offset Information)

[0071] In the foregoing, there has been described the offset information where the lengths of time of data packets for each of the stations **20** are identical to each other. However, the lengths of time of data packets for each of the stations **20** may be different from each other. In a case where lengths of time of data packets for each of the stations **20** are different from each other, a method of setting offset information will be described.

[0072] FIG. **9** is an explanatory diagram illustrating a first modified example of the offset information. As shown in FIG. **9**, the offset information may be information indicating an offset from the end of reception of a data packet by each of the stations **20**.

[0073] Specifically, the offset information **#1** for the station **20 #1** may indicate offset **#1** between the end of reception of a data packet by the station **20 #1** and the initiation of transmission of an ACK packet. Likewise, the offset information **#2** for the station **20 #2** may indicate offset **#2** between the end of reception of a data packet by the station **20 #2** and the initiation of transmission of an ACK packet, and the offset information **#3** for the station **20 #3** may indicate offset **#3** between the end of reception of a data packet by the station **20 #3** and the initiation of transmission of an ACK packet.

[0074] FIG. **10** is an explanatory diagram illustrating a second modified example of the offset information. As shown in FIG. **10**, the offset information may be information indicating a data transmission end position for a station **20** where the end of data transmission from the access point **10** is the latest, and an offset between the data transmission end position and the initiation of transmission of an ACK packet.

[0075] Specifically, the offset information **#1** for the station **20 #1** may be information indicating a data transmission end position **t** for the station **20 #2** where the end of data transmission from the access point **10** is the latest, and the offset **#1** between the data transmission end position **t** and the initiation of transmission of an ACK packet.

[0076] The offset information **#2** for the station **20 #2** may be information indicating the data transmission end position **t** and the offset **#2** between the data transmission end position **t** and the initiation of transmission of an ACK packet. Likewise, the offset information **#3** for the station **20 #3** may be information indicating the data transmission end position **t** and the offset **#3** between the data transmission end position **t** and the initiation of transmission of an ACK packet.

4. Operation of Wireless Communication Device

[0077] In the foregoing, the access control according to the embodiment of the present invention has been described. Subsequently, the operations of the access point **10** and the station **20** according to an embodiment of the present invention will be described.

(Operation of Access Point)

[0078] FIG. **11** is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the access point **10** according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. **11**, the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** sets address information and offset information of all destinations of data packets in the multi-RTS packet (**S204**). The branches **40** of the access point **10** transmit the multi-RTS packet generated by the data processing unit **48** (**S208**).

[0079] Next, if at least one CTS packet is received by the branches **40** of the access point **10** (**S212**), the data processing unit **48** spatially multiplexes the data packets by SDMA and transmits the spatially multiplexed data packets to all of destinations which are set in the multi-RTS packet

(S216).

[0080] The data processing unit **10** sets offset information for a data packet for each of the stations **20**. The setting of the offset information is not limited to a specific method. For example, the data processing unit **10** may set the offset information for each of the stations **20** by the methods described in Modified Examples of Offset Information.

[0081] Further, the access point **10** may not normally decode CTS packets when the CTS packets are transmitted from a plurality of stations **20**. In this case, the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** may determine that a CTS packet has been transmitted from at least one of the stations **20** if any signal is received by the branch **40** in the time zone when a CTS packet is expected to be received.

[0082] Next, if ACK packets are received (S220), the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** determines a transmission source station of each of the ACK packets (S224). Specifically, the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** may determine the transmission source station of each of the ACK packets based on the offset information set for each of the stations **20** and the reception timing of each of the ACK packets. For example, the data processing unit **48** of the access point **10** may determine a station **20**, for which offset information corresponding to the reception timing of an ACK packet is set, as a transmission source station of a CTS packet.

[0083] The access point **10** terminates a series of transmission sequences if the access point **10** can check ACK packets from all of destinations, or proceeds with a retransmission process if the access point **10** cannot check ACK packets from some of the destinations (S228).

(Operation of Station)

[0084] FIG. **12** is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the station **20** according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. **12**, if a packet is received by the branch of the station **20**, the data processing unit **48** of the station **20** determines whether or not the received packet is a multi-RTS packet (S304).

[0085] Further, if the received packet is a multi-RTS packet, the data processing unit **48** of the station **20** checks whether or not address information of the station **20** is recorded on the multi-RTS packet (S308). If the address information of the station **20** is recorded on the multi-RTS packet, the station **20** transmits a CTS packet to the access point **10**.

[0086] Specifically, if there is a training request in the multi-RTS packet (S312), the station **20** transmits a CTS packet containing a training field for channel estimation of the access point **10** (S316). On the other hand, if there is no training request in the multi-RTS packet (S312), the station **20** transmits a general CTS packet containing no training field (S320).

[0087] Subsequently, if the branch **40** of the station **20** receives a data packet, for which offset information is set, from the access point **10** (S324), the data processing unit **48** of the station **20** counts down an offset value indicated by the offset information (S328).

[0088] Next, if the countdown of the offset value by the data processing unit **48** of the station **20** is completed, the branch **40** of the station **20** transmits an ACK packet to the access point **10**.

[0089] If the station **20** receives a packet other than the multi-RTS packet, the station **20** performs a process corresponding to the received packet (S304). If the received multi-RTS packet does not contain address information of its own device, the station **20** sets NAV (Network Allocation Vector) based on duration information included in the multi-RTS packet (S308).

5. Conclusion

[0090] As described above, the access point **10** according to the embodiment of the present invention spatially multiplexes the data packets (DATA #1~DATA #3) and transmits the spatially multiplexed data packets (DATA #1~DATA #3) to all of the stations **20** #1~#3, which are set in the multi-RTS packet, without determining the transmission source stations of the CTS packets. Further, the access point **10** correctly determines the transmission source station of each of the ACK packets by dispersing the transmission of the ACK packets from the stations **20** #1~#3 in time.

[0091] The access control method according to the embodiment of the present invention can suppress the overhead during the RTS/CTS handshake compared to the access control method described with reference to FIG. 3. Further, according to the embodiment of the present invention, since the IEEE 802.11 standard states that an allowable error of SIFS by the station **20** is about + −10%, the embodiment of the present invention is effective in terms of easy mounting.

[0092] The preferred embodiments of the present invention have been described above with reference to the accompanying drawings, whilst the present invention is not limited to the above examples. A person skilled in the art may find various alternations and modifications within the scope of the appended claims, and it should be understood that they will naturally come under the technical scope of the present invention.

[0093] For example, it should be noted that the steps of the operations of the access point **10** and the wireless communication device **20** are not necessarily performed in time series in the order described in the flow chart. For example, the steps of the operations of the access point **10** and the wireless communication device **20** may be processed in a different order from the order described in the flow chart or in a parallel manner.

[0094] Further, it has been described above with reference to FIGS. 9 and 10 that the access point **10** sets each offset information such that an ACK response is transmitted after the data transmission from the access point **10** to all of the stations **20** has been ended. That is because the access point **10** may not perform the data transmission and the ACK reception at the same time. However, the embodiment of the present invention is not limited to the above-mentioned example. For a modified example, although the data transmission from the access point **10** to all of the stations **20** is not ended, an ACK response may be transmitted from each of the stations **20** one after another when the data transmission to each of the stations **20** is ended. For example, in the example shown in FIG. 10, if the data transmission from the access point **10** to the station **20** #1 is ended, an ACK response may be transmitted from the station **20** #1 even before the data transmission end position t. By means of such a configuration, since a period of time taken until the access point **10** completes the reception of all of the ACK packets is shortened, it is possible to improve the throughput.

[0095] In addition, it is possible to make a computer program configured for hardware, such as CPU, ROM and RAM, which is incorporated in the access point **10** and the wireless communication device **20**, to execute the same function as that of each of elements of the access point **10** and the wireless communication device **20**. Further, a storage medium for storing the computer program is also provided.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

[0096] **10** Access point [0097] **20** Station [0098] **40, 40-1, 40-2, 40-N** Branch CLAIM [0099] **42, 42-1, 42-2, 42-N** Antenna element [0100] **44, 44-1, 44-2, 44-N** Receiver unit [0101] **46, 46-1, 46-2, 46-N** Transmitter unit [0102] **48** Data processing unit

Claims

1. An electronic device, comprising: circuitry configured to: transmit a multi-request to send (multi-RTS) signal to a first wireless communication device and a second wireless communication device, wherein the multi-RTS signal comprises identification information of the first wireless communication device and the second wireless communication device, receive at least one of a first clear to send (CTS) signal from the first wireless communication device or a second CTS signal from the second wireless communication device, wherein: the first CTS signal is transmitted in response to the multi-RTS signal, the second CTS signal is transmitted concurrently with the transmission of the first CTS signal in response to the multi-RTS signal, the first CTS signal and the second CTS signal include a same training field, the first CTS signal is transmitted after a short inter-frame space (SIFS) from a first reception time of the multi-RTS signal at the first wireless

communication device, and the second CTS signal is transmitted after the SIFS from a second reception time of the multi-RTS signal at the second wireless communication device; and transmit a multiplexed data signal to the first wireless communication device and the second wireless communication device, based on reception of the first CTS signal and the second CTS signal, wherein the multiplexed data signal includes first data for the first wireless communication device and second data for the second wireless communication device.
