

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Wireless Cities ... Communities of Interests Conference

Wireless Coffee

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April 17, 2007



Coffee and wireless access

- Cultural change over past 15 years.
- Coffee “shops” as internet access point.
- Wireless as marketing component.
- How people actually access the internet through coffee shop wireless.



Terms

- **Coffeehouse:** espresso based drinks
- **Coffee shop:** dated, still in use
- **Internet café:** less beverage oriented; fixed machines
- **Cyber café:** less beverage oriented; fixed machines.



Finding wireless

- Libraries
- Bars
- Bookstores
- Hotel rooms
- Car dealers
- Coffee shops [90% listed]



Researchers

- Mike Lee
- Dan Fergus
- Kevin Condit
- Sarah Steil
- Amilcar Davis
- Kristin Helle
- Peter Gaustad
- Randy Olson Fabio
- Sam Schmidt
- Nicole Steinhofer
- Ange Tank



Venues

- **Chains:**
 - Starbucks
 - Caribou - local based chain
 - Dunn Bros.
- **Independents:**
 - Anodyne, Blue Moon, Minnehaha Coffee, Espresso Royale, Java Jacks.



Research methodology

- Interview subjects selected by individual researchers.
- Open ended questions
- Gift certificate on completion
- Laptop users only



Research assumption

- Wireless access as primary reason for laptop users to visit coffee shops. [proved incorrect]



Initial findings

- Computer use more important than internet access. [30-60% non internet]
- Even with laptop, computer use not full time. [up to 30% non-use]
- Most users have high-speed at home.
- Remainder have wireless access through neighbors or university.



Library v. coffee house

- All interviewed knew of library access.
- All chose coffee shop for location, hours, 'other' affordances.
- Libraries moving to provide coffee.
- Library computer access often fixed computers, less emphasis on wireless.



Wireless user choice

- Even with broadband, a “change of scenery” or to “get out of the house”
- Being “alone in public”
- Technology use is not solely a matter of internet access.
- Local community connection and chain of multiple locations [fungible].
- Micro environmental decisions: noise, time of day, light.



Implications

- City wide wireless access will have little effect on coffee shops [short term]
 - Broad band already available, separate
 - Suburban users unconnected
 - Free use in semi-public environment
 - Other: coffee, etc.
- Wireless is part of an expected bundle of coffee shop attributes.
- Economic impact of wireless is minimal



Implications

- Coffee shop as flexible, free workspace, using wireless as part of business requirements.
- San Francisco “bedouins”; digital nomads.
- Coffee shop as part of commercial public space.



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