

## **Report: East Asia to Drive C-RAN Deployments**

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Ahmed Ali, research analyst at ABI Research, said deployments of Cloud Radio Access Networks (C-RAN) will continue to increase across the Asian region while remaining limited in other parts of the world.

"Other regions, where scarcity of cell sites is an issue, are likely to develop a market for partial deployment of C-RAN in densely populated areas," Ali said.

The move toward Software Defined Networks (SDN) is driven by significant reductions in CAPEX and OPEX. ABI said operators in East Asia, including heavy hitters like China Mobile, have been actively supporting C-RAN structure and network virtualization to tackle increasing deployment cost.

As evidence of the shift, ABI points to developments in South Korea, where the country's biggest operators, SK Telecom and KT, have implemented centralized base station architectures for their LTE networks. Meanwhile, Japanese operator NTT Docomo joined C-RAN enthusiasts in 2013 as the operator announced the adoption of the structure for its LTE-A rollout. China Mobile, which has been conducting major trials across the country is expected to incorporate C-RAN in its commercially deployed networks in China between 2015 and 2016.

ABI concludes that the major obstacle for C-RAN is meeting fronthaul requirements. Transferring large amounts of data from distributed Remote Radio Heads (RRHs) to a central processing location requires extremely high bandwidth and low latency fiber links, which is a part of the mobile network that remains under developed in most regions outside East Asia.

ABI estimates that in 2014, half of the RRH shipments will be LTE and by 2018, the total number of shipments will amount to more than 2 million units, almost double the number shipped in 2013.

"Gradual growth and development in infrastructure submarkets like RRH/BBU equipment and fronthaul solutions and even small cells will in return have a positive effect on the C-RAN market," continues Ali.

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