Driving IT growth in Africa

Communications technologies will catalyse growth across all IT markets in Africa in the next three to five years, according to Gartner Inc.

Will Hahn, principal research analyst at Gartner

"Better bandwidth capacity and quality of service are the prerequisites for growth in a number of other areas - and have historically been a brake on development in much of Africa," said Will Hahn, principal research analyst at Gartner.

"Although cellular technologies remained dominant across much of the continent, and the advantages of portability were difficult to replace, there were clear disadvantages to mobile dependence, especially in terms of capacity. The markets that are mobile-dominated are lagging and will continue to do so until fibre backbone capacity reaches global levels."

"Fixed will always be faster than mobile"

Major cellular network providers have invested heavily in fibre networks across the continent. "Fixed will always be faster than mobile - not even 4G mobile can compete with the latest generation of fibre," said Hahn. "While cloud adoption is lagging to various degrees in different countries across the continent, we expect it to progress as fixed network investment increases."

"We also witness an increasing interest in drones and balloons as a way to provide connectivity," said Hahn. "There is a small but real possibility that, at one stroke, millions of people could gain internet access where previously they had none - at zero cost for them."

Hahn said that continent-wide enterprise IT growth strategies were unworkable. "There are 53 individual countries in Africa, and each requires a different strategy". He added that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is emerging as a surprise investment destination."The appetite for risk around Africa is unique. The DRC may be attractive because it finishes a

strong second in so many areas; it is relatively large and unpenetrated."

In addition, Hahn will discuss how digital services will transform telecom markets in South Africa and beyond at the Gartner Symposium/ITxpo Africa 2014 which takes place at the CTICC from 10-12 September.