

ABI: Bluetooth and ZigBee Will Clash

Written by Marco Attard
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A war looms over the new and emerging markets in need of low power wireless connections and device interoperability. It involves two rival factions-- Bluetooth Smart and ZigBee.



The markets the war will wage on are various, ranging from connected home devices (remote controls, TVs, STBs, etc) to wireless sensors (medical, health, sports, home automation, etc).

According to ABI Research both technologies will see "rapid growth" from 2013... but Bluetooth will emerge victorious, as shipments should reach over 1 billion annually by 2016.

ZigBee device shipment forecasts smaller but still "significant"-- 350 million by 2016.

Why is Bluetooth the winner? ABI says Bluetooth Smart is the "obvious choice" for simple point-to-point control thanks to a "massive" interoperable device ecosystem. However ZigBee/RF4CE happens to be the ideal choice for more complex systems demanding a high node count.

Whichever way the wireless connection war goes, there will definitely be one winner-- the supplier smart enough to enter the market early and successfully dominate it.

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ABI says most suppliers target only one of the two markets. CSR and Nordic Semiconductor are going for Bluetooth Smart, while Freescale Semiconductor and GreenPeak target ZigBee. Meanwhile Texas Instruments has offerings using both technologies, with ICs for both markets.

The moral of the story? Choose your side carefully... or go for both!

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