



Case study: mobile money



December 2010

„Mobile money“ is an alternative payment method where customers can use their cell phone to make payments and money transactions, without needing a bank account.

Using our software **mergeflow.stream**, we analyzed publicly available news on mobile money. We were particularly interested in automatic assignment of news events to countries. Our results suggest

- (1) Mobile money is a technology most prominently featured in the developing world.
- (2) Two big providers of mobile money are Vodacom and MTN, both South African. The sets of countries in which each provider operates are roughly complimentary.

mergeflow.stream enabled us to complete our analysis in less than one hour.

1. Our questions

Given its potential as a technological platform for hawalas, mobile money could be a relevant topic not only to the financial community but also to the intelligence community.

In a simple news analysis, we asked the following questions:

- (1) In what countries is mobile money particularly prominent?
- (2) Who are the big providers for mobile money in these countries?

2. Our method and data

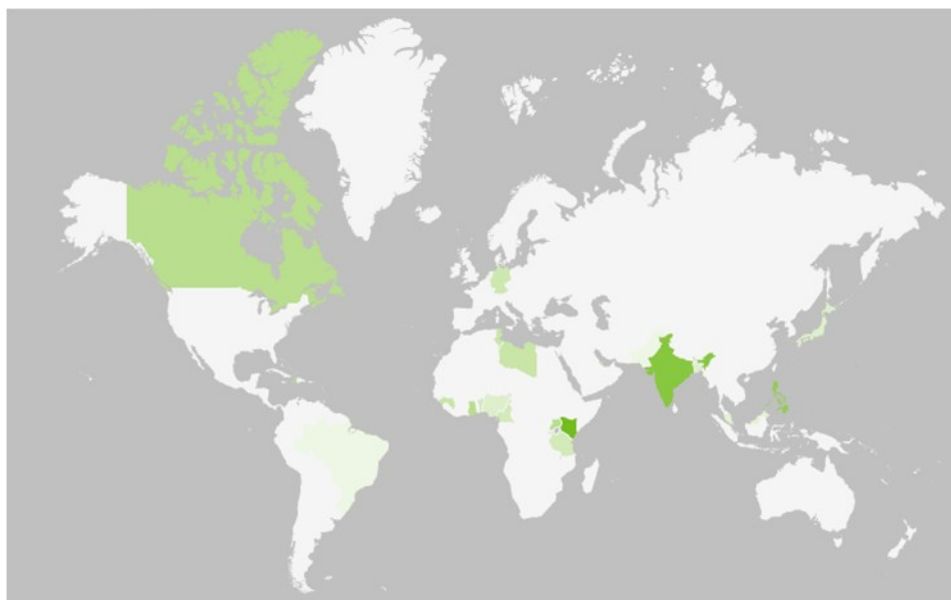
In order to address our question, we used mergeflow.stream, our software for analyzing news streams.

We set up publicly available news feeds in mergeflow.stream. These news feeds delivered new results from major search engine crawlers, containing the phrase „mobile money“. From these feeds, we analyzed news data from November 2010.

3. Our results

Countries where mobile money is important

The screenshot from mergeflow.stream below shows the result of automatic mapping of news events to countries. One can see that mobile money is most prominent in developing countries. Exceptions are Canada and Germany: these countries are mentioned more in connection with technology providers, less in connection with mobile money users.



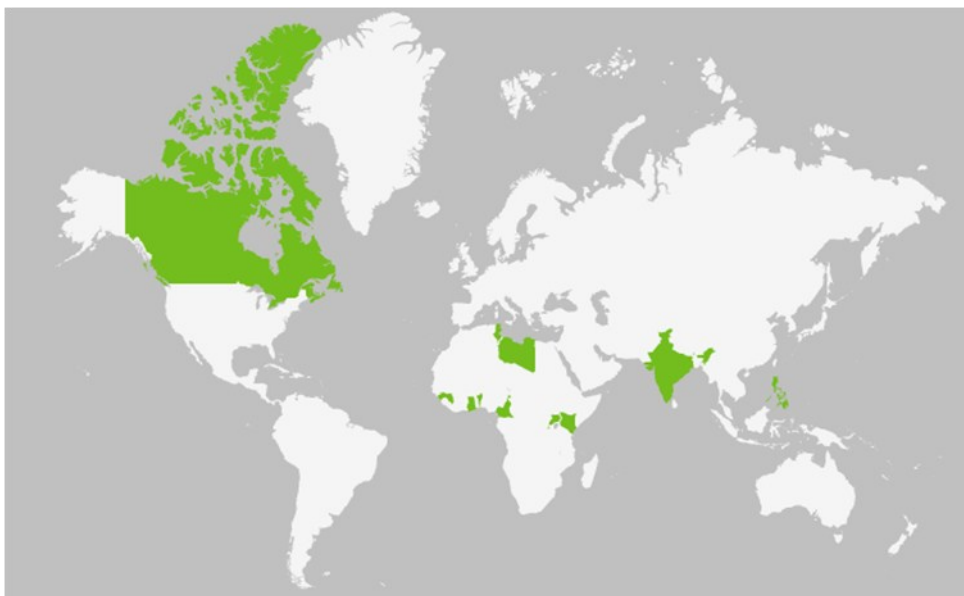
Mobile money providers

Our second goal was to find main providers of mobile money. We did not know in advance who these providers might be, so we could not explicitly search for particular providers. Rather we used mergeflow.stream to generally look for „documents with new topics“ (hoping that some providers might qualify as „new topic“, e.g. because of their activity). The screenshot below shows number of documents with new topics through November 2010 (mergeflow.stream automatically identifies documents with new topics and then generates the interactive chart below). On Nov 10, 2010, mergeflow.stream identified MTN as a „new topic“:

Number of documents with new topics



Automatically assigning MTN-mobile-money-news to countries reveals the following picture (map automatically generated by mergeflow.stream):



MTN:
global mobile money activities

Performing the same event-to-country mapping for Vodacom, another big mobile money provider, shows the following result (map automatically generated by mergeflow.stream):



Vodacom:
global mobile money activities

4. Our conclusions

Here are the main conclusions from our analysis of mobile money:

- Mobile money is a technology most prominently featured in the developing world.
- Two big providers of mobile money are Vodacom and MTN, both South African. The sets of countries in which each provider operates are roughly complimentary.

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