

Case Study

Aspect

Building trade-policy capacity

2021





Venture

InterAnalysis



Social science discipline

Economics



Aspect Members

University of Sussex



Sector

Government and Public
Services; Information
Technology and Education



Route-to-market

Spinout

InterAnalysis, a social sciences spin-out is helping governments decipher trade policies, across the world.

Economists have sophisticated tools for analysing the potential impact of trade policy agreements, particularly important for developing nations. However, these tools require highly trained personnel and contain sophisticated mathematical modelling techniques that, while effective, are time consuming, unaffordable and, for policy makers, frequently inappropriate or infeasible to use.



Research undertaken by Professor [Michael Gasiolek](#) and Dr [Peter Holmes](#), and Professors [Jim Rollo](#), [Alasdair Smith](#) and [Alan Winters](#), carried out in the [Department of Economics](#) at the University of Sussex and at the [Sussex European Institute](#), led to the development of a novel software solution that helps governments and policy makers to understand trade priorities and inform trade policy decisions, without the need for highly technical modelling, nor the high financial and human cost that is often involved.

InterAnalysis is the University of Sussex's first social science research-to-commercialisation spinout company, based at the Sussex Innovation Centre, and jointly owned by the University. The founders have taken the principles of evaluation of trade policy options based on core economic theory. Using their academic research on regional integration, they distilled these into simple and generally applicable methods that can be applied by any policy maker.

Their TradeSift software was initially created in response to a request in 2004 from the Department of International Development (DFID) to develop a method of evaluating regional trade agreements that could be applied without recourse to complicated mathematics or modelling. Since then, the spin-out turned the software into a commercial product which has been assisting developing countries to build capacity with a low cost, rapid and robust approach to analysing trade policy issues for the formulation of policy and positions to adopt trade negotiating positions.

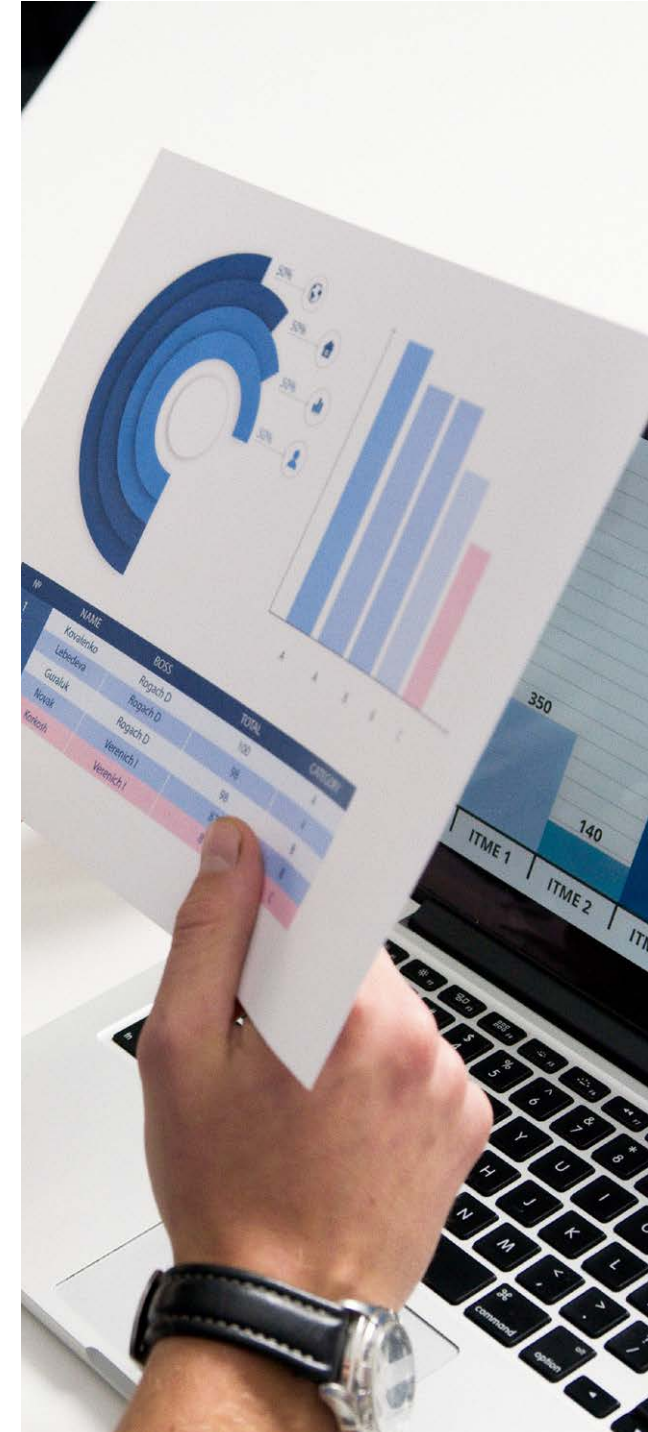
InterAnalysis works with organisations in the UK and internationally, delivering training courses which incorporate the software to a range of international trade and development organisations. These include, the then UK Department for Business & Industrial Strategy (BIS), Dept for International

Development (DFID), Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), the European Commission's Directorate-General for Trade; the Inter-American Development Bank; several regional integration bodies in Africa.

TradeSift is underpinned with economics methods and concepts and is achieving social impact on a global scale by improving international trade agreements, reducing the costs of consumption goods, and creating social and economic impact for importing countries

The impact

- Since 2009, over 50 TradeSift training courses have been delivered to more than 600 trade officials from over 100 countries, including:
 - A programme of training in Pakistan in 2020 which evolved into delivering an online eModule for the Ministry of Commerce to institutionalise training for probationer and mid-career officers on trade policy and trade data analysis. The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) has also attended the programme and now utilises TradeSift to determine export growth opportunities for Pakistan's business sector.
- In India, CUTS (an NGO) uses TradeSift in its evaluation of free trade agreements and their impact on the Indian economy. This feeds into a quarterly dossier to inform the Indian Government.
- As part of the FCO Conflict Pool initiative over three years, TradeSift delivered training and trade policy workshops that were proven to be of diplomatic benefit by providing an opportunity to organise meetings between Pakistani and Indian officials. Between 2012-2015, workshops were held in Kathmandu, Islamabad and Colombo, culminating in a report, "Key Issue in Trade between India and Pakistan".
- Early recognition from the UK government's Trade Policy Unit that TradeSift had an impact internationally, with an initial contract in 2012 for training and capacity-building for the Ministry of Commerce, India, who also then funded a workshop for Indian regional government officials.





TradeSift training has taken place successfully in TDAP. We appreciated the facilitation provided by the TradeSift Team for the smooth execution of the training organized for the officers of TDAP. We are actively using analytical tools learnt during the sessions and delivered a positive impact in trade analysis.



Riaz Ahmed Shaikh, Director General,
Government of Pakistan, Trade
Development Authority of Pakistan
(Trade Facilitation Division), March 2021

- A network of trust and recognition of expertise has been built, assisted by regional funders such as the UK's Trade Advocacy Fund (TAF and TAF2+), EU, USAID, GIZ and Conference Board of Canada, and their delivery partners. This has enabled the spinout to expand TradeSift training into further regional capacity building programmes as regional trade agreements gain momentum. Consequently, TradeSift has expanded its range of training programmes, including:
 - *Since the Brexit vote in 2016, TradeSift personnel have worked with UK Government departments, using the software to enhance their ability to analyse trade scenarios and advise policymakers.*
 - *Capacity building training to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) through the delivery of training on trade in goods (2015) and trade in services (2017) analysis. This has been informative in identifying the region's trade priorities and trade negotiations strategy within the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (2019).*
 - *Support to the East Africa Community (EAC) (2013).*
 - *Capacity building training supported by the CUTIS project (Canada-Ukraine Trade Investment Support Project), delivered in the Ukraine in 2017 in light of Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.*
 - *Trade Policy training for FCO officials in China (2019).*
- Post-training survey feedback reports that 94% of participants find there is a very good balance between concepts of trade and the practical application of the software, and 82% of participants expect to use TradeSift in their daily work.

The commercial research journey: key learnings

- Academics are increasingly required to demonstrate how their research is relevant to the real world through constant engagement with potential end users right from the start of the commercialising research process. The success of Tradesift has largely been down to high levels of trust in the academics' expertise and by continuously building rapport with the end users. This has bolstered success and impact for the spinout.
 - Word of mouth has also been extremely useful in extending TradeSift's reach and subsequent inclusion in consortia, collaborative projects and expanding alliance partners.
 - In the trade space, academics who are influential rarely wait for their academic papers to be published before engaging, instead they discuss their summaries with their audience and engage with people on the research.
- Some key advice:**
- Don't work in silos in your academic space, work with business as you develop your research – the world moves very quickly and users' needs are continually changing. Being inter-disciplinary and delivering policy in action are the orders of the day.
 - It's very important to communicate the value of your solution. What particular grievance does it solve, or what insight or enhancement can it provide better or more quickly?
 - Maintain ongoing communication with your audience, consumers and subscribers, particularly once your research has been commercialised.



"The investment of time, funding and effort in gaining an initial worthwhile contract is exciting and rewarding but ultimately the key challenge is sustaining momentum and revenue. Bottling many years of research into a "product" can make the end result look too simple. An important learning for the company was that while we had developed a software tool that the researchers had faith in, there was a need to gain and maintain interest and to deliver revenue. To that end, defining the solution benefits of the software was essential. To answer that, we developed training programmes which were relevant to developing countries, and which combined topical regional trade themes which, more importantly, included a highly practical component of familiarisation with the software. The training programmes walk analysts & policy makers through these themes while demonstrating the rapid and robust insights TradeSift delivers. Academics want to, and should, play to their strengths which invariably steer toward less involvement in other business management or

administrative areas. There is a need for professional business management expertise which can knit together a cohesive organisation that incorporates strategy, technical/ knowledge skills, resources to deliver and an agreed operational plan. Success, in our case, was a combination of knowledge of working within government and how to engage with government institutions, plus mathematical & professional software development skills combined with organisational skills. Collectively, these have enabled TradeSift to maintain its place in the market."

Michael Laffey, InterAnalysis



What's next for InterAnalysis



With the fluctuation in bilateral and regional trading arrangements, the spinout continues to be a trusted resource for trade related capacity building activities in developing countries and across trading regions. With a strong working knowledge of India and Pakistan and with similar work undertaken for economic regions across the African continent, the company would like to play their part in capacity building initiatives to support the recent ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), with the aim to work with the nations' secretariats and economic groups.

An exciting development is the request for the inclusion of climate, gender or post-Covid related trade dimensions in trade analysis and best practice in policy making. This has led to broadening collaborations while deepening the offering to their network.

The global pandemic has provided InterAnalysis with an opportunity to explore expanding into further markets, namely an improved online offering, the education and professional markets. The aim is to upskill professionals, using the solution to demystify and simplify international trade data allowing people to 'fact check' complex trade data or the impacts of trade policy changes on them or their organisations. They are exploring embedding this knowledge and expertise onto Tertiary level and Executive Education courses, and are currently working with a Chinese university on a pilot programme and hope to replicate this across China. If successful, the aim will be to expand into further universities & institutions worldwide.

Background Information



Michael Laffey



Role

Business Support Manager



Degree

Professional Diploma, Business Administration (Open University)

Michael is InterAnalysis' Business Support Manager and is responsible for managing Requests for Proposals, client management, project management and business capability. Michael previously worked as Senior Director, Digital Operations for EMI Music, responsible for UK, Europe, South East Asia and Japan. Michael brings a wealth of external experience in team management, development, strategy, operations and account management to the spinout.



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Website:

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Publications:

www.tradesift.com/publications/

Course History:

www.tradesift.com/courses/past-training-courses/

News:

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<https://twitter.com/TradeSift>

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Case Study

Aspect

Transforming Society Through
Social Science Innovation

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research.

Supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund, Aspect members sit at the epicentre of discovery, imagination and progress in the social sciences. We draw together pioneering academics with innovative industry leaders to tackle the most complex societal challenges of our time.



Aspect is funded by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund