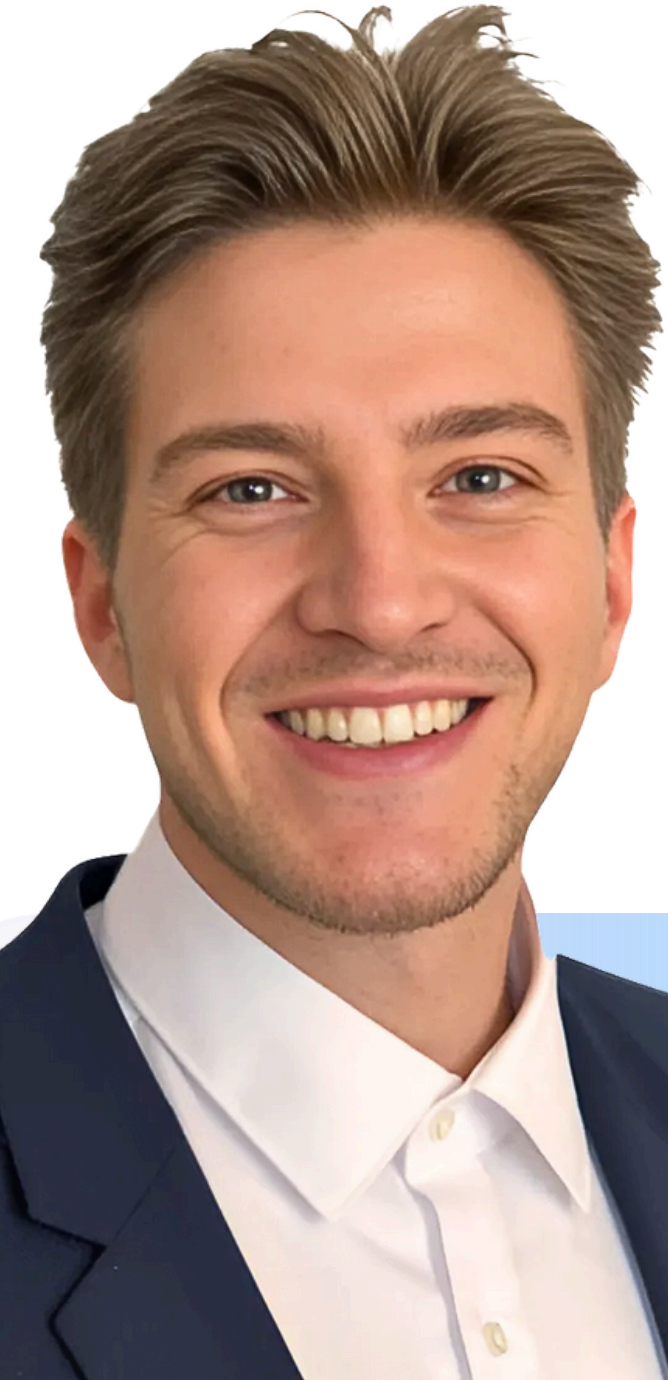
eye square

BVM Berufsverband Deutscher Markt- und Sozialforscher e.V.

A Conversation with Roman Burkart:



eye square's Research-based Path to the BVM Innovation Awards

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Hello Roman, can you share with us a bit about your background and your journey to becoming a part of eye square?

I never planned this exact path, but looking back, it makes a lot of sense. I'm a trained psychologist and was always interested in the intersection where humans and technology come together. At eye square, I started as a consultant in the Brand & Media unit, but my work naturally evolved to include a stronger emphasis on qualitative studies.

In the end, I didn't see that as a disadvantage, because it allowed me to grow in both research areas and constantly learn new things. As time passed, I grew more and more interested in the technology side of things – which eventually led me to move to the data science department. This slight career switch allowed me to develop profound knowledge on eye square's technologies and actively be part of new innovations which I really enjoyed.

Ultimately, I was offered an exciting opportunity where I could take on new responsibilities and took the chance to become a team lead and product manager in a double role.

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As a key member of eye square, can you elaborate on your role within the company and how it aligns with the innovative culture that eye square is known for? What aspects of your role do you find most fulfilling?

As a product manager, I act as a connector between my own Create team, operational units, development, and others such as the management, sales, or marketing team. I try to bring everything together. Being constantly in the center of action, I am, or at least I feel a significant co-responsibility for the success of our newest innovation— the digital experience Sandbox. I'm in constant exchange with the different stakeholders of this product, which makes the role very versatile— I love that every week looks a bit different, that I get to talk to different people with special knowledge and perspectives, and that I ultimately learn a lot of new things along the way.

Looking back, my cross-unit experience was crucial in growing into the role of a product manager— I had the chance to really get to know the different departments and build a solid network within the company. After almost 5 years at eye square, it feels like I know the company from the inside out.

The innovation culture has also had a major influence on my development. Through the Innovation Initiative that were the 'Tribes', I was able to explore new topics like rethinking the knowledge management at eye square or exploring AI capabilities for the units. Of course, the actual output of these Tribes was valuable for the company as a whole, but I find it even more important that they provided a space for employees to get new impulses, to work within interdisciplinary teams, to bring new and different skills to the table, and to develop skills in a way that aligned with their personal interests.

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But sometimes, impulses from colleagues might not be enough: with the current pace of technological development, we constantly have to look left and right, and we just cannot sleep on innovation— being up-to-date about new and helpful technological ways that make our products or workflows better or more efficient is absolutely essential. Although I would love to dedicate x number of hours per week just for this kind of research, subscribing to specific 'AI News' Portals often covers half of the deal.

Besides my tasks as a product manager, I have also become Lead of the CREATE Team. Being a team lead (even if it is a small team) is something I really enjoy. Furthermore, from the experiences with my product team, being creative, open-minded, and comfortable with autonomous problem-solving helps a lot in this matter. The CREATE team, as the name suggests, takes care of creation within the company. Of course, this has a strong emphasis on building or recreating digital environments in the sandbox— but it's not only that. Our mission is also to gain and spread relevant sandbox knowledge through educational programs—communication in general is a big factor for our team. Lastly, the emotions topic falls into our department which also strongly overlaps with the data science department.

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How do you feel about the opportunity to present at the BVM Innovation Award event, and what does this nomination mean for you and the team at eye square?

Innovation has always been one of the major pillars of eye square— presenting at the BVM Innovation Award is a great moment for me, but personally, the bigger reward is to see affirmation for the efforts that all our brilliant colleagues at eye square have put into building and evolving these technologies.

Regardless, it's a great opportunity for us to show what we are capable of.

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Could you elaborate a little on the innovation eye square was nominated for?

Our submission focuses on the Integrated Human Experience Measurement, a methodological approach for a comprehensive analysis of human behavior that combines our latest innovations: the Digital Experience Sandbox, SEAL Eye Tracking, and proven emotion measurement techniques. We present an integrated research system that simultaneously captures attention, emotion, and cognition, providing broader and deeper insights into human behavior.

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At the heart of this research is the Sandbox, which serves as a technical framework for the methods that target what and how users see and what they feel.

The sandbox is a whole topic on its own, but in this context and in simple terms, you can imagine the sandbox as a car repair shop where you build and modify a car (or a digital experience). The integrated measurement could serve as the analogy of using different diagnostic tools and measurements (sensors, internal protocols) during realistic scenarios (e.g., an engine performance test) to check the inside and outside of the car to get a complete picture of its status.

The integrated human experience measurement uses several methods, such as eye tracking, facial expression tracking, and explicit data from surveys, to get the full picture— two major strengths emerge from this: one is that you can test the full human experience very efficiently streamlined in one session. This makes the full analytic power more accessible to everyone.

The other is that the different data streams offer a combined explanatory power in your analysis that exceeds each stream if checked independently. The full potential of these combined analyses might still have to be uncovered, but we're now providing the framework and methods that open the door wide open to holistic research of the Human Experience. We offer a holistic solution for practical, valid, and scalable results.

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Can you explain in a simplified manner why the Sandbox functions the way it does?

What was the philosophy that drove Sandbox's main features? (Features that address those problems alongside of other external challenges)

With the Integrated Human Experience Measurement, eye square presents an integrated research system that simultaneously captures perception, emotion, and cognition and thus provides holistic insights into human behavior.

The Sandbox can be seen as a successor of our InContext Technology. With InContext, we were already building really accurate replicas of popular platforms—Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and several other platforms and e-com stores - and used these as realistic test environments. But setting those up took a lot of manual work from highly experienced engineers. The novelty with the Sandbox is that now we can create and modify platforms at a much faster pace, with way more flexibility—and without needing that same level of technical expertise from the people building them.

Democratizing access is another key philosophical feature of the Sandbox. The idea is that, with a bit of practice and training, anyone should be able to use it and get fast, presentable results. That includes less experienced colleagues, partners, or even clients. To lower the barriers even further, we will also introduce a training program soon to help people feel more comfortable getting started.

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What we've seen so far is that every new person brings something meaningful to the table. Each one contributes to the collective Sandbox knowledge, and that creates strong synergy effects. Personally, I find that exciting to watch—because in the end, it's something everyone involved truly benefits from.

Another thing that makes Sandbox unique is its ability to collaborate— you can work in teams on a project, try out ideas, and show them to your colleagues or stakeholders without even having tested something. This collaborative aspect highlights the Sandbox's ability to act as a premium tool for experimentation and conceptualizing before following next steps in the development process. Imagine it's Halloween and you have an idea how to put a nice theme on your company's website— with the Sandbox, you can quickly bring your idea to life and see it in the real context instead of using rusty PowerPoint sketches. And I have not even mentioned AI which will likely help us to realize ideas even faster in the future, while we are still profiting from the benefits that our InContext technology brought, like behavior metrics.

With these characteristics in mind, we are now able to overcome previous research challenges like maintaining a sustainable balance between cost, quality, and timing of comparable projects. This integrated, complete solution delivers practical, valid, and scalable results without any additional strain on the participants. The innovative core elements of the approach lie in the unique combination of three technologies: precise eye tracking on all common end devices, a differentiated emotion analysis with the detection of up to 47 facial expressions, and the automated measurement of behavioral metrics such as clicks, dwell time, and interactions.

The simultaneous collection of these data in real usage contexts in combination with explicit survey data enables a complete analysis of the interplay of perception, emotion, and cognition— and thus provides valuable insights into the effective design of communication, product, and user strategies.

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What knowledge could brands expect by using the holistic system in research?

With one measurement, you get data across multiple fields that provide insights on how users/customers see, feel, think, and behave —the holistic system covers all areas of information processing that happen during a digital experience—and while explicit ratings may be "good enough" on the surface, they might not always tell the whole truth . Behavioral data doesn't lie. Using data gathered from all sources can really help in explaining the results on a deeper level.

Because there are multiple sets of data, the result is a much more in-depth picture of human behavior. For example, imagine your survey results show that users are not very satisfied with a website stimulus—with the integrated measurement you cannot only look at bar charts with statements or read what people explicitly thought about the website, but you could also retrace at which time of the user journey negative emotions occurred and what elements caught their attention during that time.

Another example: if results from your tv spot test show that users poorly remembered your product, you could look out for the WHY. Were users distracted by another element? Were the users maybe not attentive because the spot evoked boredom or negative feelings?

These are questions that can be answered through the combinatory power of integrated human experience measurement. What about having an AI find repetitive patterns that might be hard to detect for the human eye?

Ultimately, the holistic approach enables brands to make the best decisions based on data.