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The Origin of a Vision: How eye square Was Brought to Life

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Pioneers of Human Experience – 25 Years of Innovative Research with Psychology and Technology

eye square was founded in 1999 in Berlin by Sabrina Duda and Michael Schießl. The company's roots are deeply embedded in university research in psychology, particularly in the fields of engineering psychology and neuropsychology.

Sabrina Duda, influenced by her studies with Professor Hartmuth Wandtke at Humboldt University, brought her knowledge of usability into the founding phase of eye square. Michael Schießl, who studied psychology at Yale University, was shaped by the research of American psychologist Mahzarin R. Banaji, who explored thinking and feeling in a social context and focused on mental systems operating in unconscious modes.

As a co-founder, Schießl contributed his psychological knowledge of emotional reactions to digital content in the early years of market research. His ideas influenced the study of product usability and enriched brand perception research with insights from social cognition and neuropsychology.

Philipp Reiter, Andreas Thoelke, and Friedrich Jakobi completed the founding team in the early years. Philipp Reiter brought a Master's degree in Psychology from the Technical University of Berlin and additional studies in psychology from Salisbury University. Andreas Thoelke was working as a developer for Pixelpark at the time, and Friedrich Jakobi already had several years of experience in commercial, analytical, and research roles.

Dynamic Waves: The Core Team of eye square and Its Journey to New Research Fields

Our company's development can be divided into three significant phases, marked by the contributions of new employees who have influenced and shaped our journey. They remain part of our core team to this day. The beginning of our first wave was in 1999, focusing on research topics like usability and practicality. Dr. Julia Nitschke joined the founding team at this time. Our work was concentrated in Germany and Europe, with clients like Deutsche Bank, eBay, Ford, and Jaguar.

In 2010, we experienced a second wave with the expansion of our research into user experience and hedonics. Carina de López, Liane Kuhlhoff, and Stefan Schönherr joined the core team during this phase. Our presence expanded into Asia, including China, Korea, Japan, and India, with clients such as LG Electronics, PayPal, Porsche, Mercedes Benz, and Miele.

The third wave, in 2020, focused primarily on human experience, AI, emotions, and meaning. This phase brought Dominik Unser-Nad, Florian Fried, Max Pietzker, and Julia Gurney into our company. Our expansion reached the USA, with clients like Henkel, Deutsche Bahn, Google, Meta, Techniker Krankenkasse, and B/S/H.

Tangible Science: From the Research Lab to Real Life and the Online World

One of our first major projects was a usability study for the mail-order company Quelle in 1999, and one of our earliest clients in eye-tracking was SevenOneMedia. At the time, there was no analysis software; individual videos were recorded. Our client requested aggregated data, which prompted us to develop our own software. As our technologies evolved, it became evident that the combination of eye-tracking and technology was a strong complement.

Market Research in the Lab

The journey began in the late 1990s with traditional lab experiments. In the early phase of our company, we conducted research in a controlled environment, gaining detailed insights into the cognitive and emotional responses of our test subjects. Eye-tracking, as a core technology, allowed us to gather groundbreaking insights into visual attention and user behavior. These years of lab experiments laid the foundation for the scientific accuracy and methodology that still distinguishes us today.

The Integration of Field Studies

As technology progressed and the need for more realistic investigations grew, we began transferring methods from the lab into the real world. We conducted field studies where advertising materials and user experiences were tested in more natural environments. These studies allowed us to better understand the impact of contextual factors on consumer perception and behavior.

A crucial step in this phase was the development and application of mobile eye-tracking devices and wearable sensors, enabling us to measure the behavior of test subjects in various everyday situations. This technology opened up new possibilities for examining the effectiveness of advertising measures in supermarkets, public transport, and other real-world environments.

Digital Revolution with Online and InContext Technologies

With the increasing spread of the internet and digital media, our focus shifted further into the online realm. Since 2013, we have focused on the online world. One of the challenges was transferring the insights gained from lab and field studies to the digital world. Here, the development of eye square's InContext technologies played a central role. InContext makes it possible to test advertising measures and user experiences directly in authentic digital environments. As a method, this technology ensures that study results are realistic and externally valid.

Current Developments and the Future of Our Research

Today, eye square is at the forefront of developing InContext research technology. The continuous development and refinement of these methods enable us, as researchers, to better understand the complexity of human experience in the digital world. Through the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning, we can now analyze data more quickly and precisely, leading to even more meaningful results.

We see the future of our InContext technology in the further automation and scaling of methods. We aim to make research even more accessible and efficient to meet the ever-growing demands of the market. But our goal remains the same: to drive change in market research through innovative technologies and well-founded psychological insights, offering clients valuable insights into consumer behavior and emotions.

Over the past decades, we have evolved from traditional lab experiments to a leading company in InContext research, distinguished by continuous innovation and a holistic view of the human experience in research. Our company history is marked by expansion, technological advancement, and a deep understanding of the psychological aspects of market research.

As a market research company, we stand for Human Experience Research, covering the research areas of brand and media research, user experience research, and shopper experience research. Implicit research has been particularly important to us since the founding years, influenced by the scientific background of the founders in psychology, and has been our hallmark for 25 years.

We research with a holistic approach that considers the human being as a whole. With our specially developed neurosemiotic model and the three psychological levels of perception, thinking, and feeling, we understand the human as a user or consumer in their entire experience.

Our long-term vision is to remain at the forefront of innovation research and to develop new, groundbreaking methods. An important part of our company vision is also the annual Memex conference, which has been held since 2015 and focuses on current trends and topics in digital interaction. The conference we host promotes the exchange between science, technology, and art, providing valuable insights into human perception and emotions. It underscores our commitment to staying ahead of the curve in market research for the past 25 years and exploring new paths.

Watch additional image gallery with subtext!

The founding team of eye square, Michael Schießl and Sabrina Duda, is pictured on the veranda of their office located on Schlesische Straße in Berlin-Kreuzberg. At that time, the company was still known as i2, and the research cube, equipped with two high-performance computers for various types of studies, bore this branding. When it came to purchasing a domain, founder Sabrina Duda ultimately chose the name eye square, a decision that proved to be ideal, as the company has been utilizing eye tracking technologies in market research since the year 2000.

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For 25 years, we have been both researchers and developers, integrating theory with practical coding. We operate within a genuine and authentic context, fostering interpersonal relationships and conducting studies that merge innovative methodological approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior.

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As a pioneer in eye tracking, we have utilized this technology for 24 years in implicit research, amassing one of the largest data archives globally during this period. Early on, we employed an SMI eye tracker, both wired and wireless, connected to a main computer, allowing us to investigate customer attention not only in laboratory settings but also in various testing environments outside the lab.

In the 2000s, we utilized a Tobii 1750 Eye Tracker for an analog reading study with automatic page detection in our laboratories. The perception windows and viewing conditions are crucial for static media.

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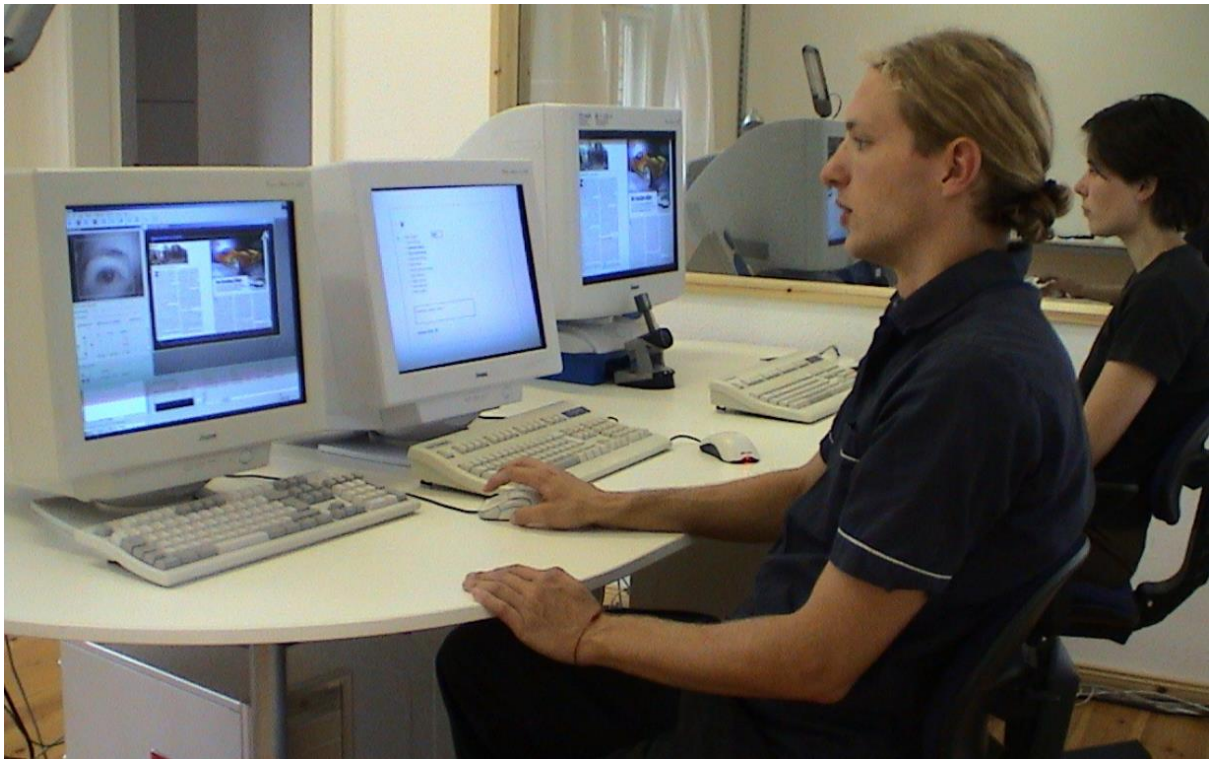

Eye tracking solutions were also utilized for studies conducted on desktop computers. our labs, we examined the online reading behavior of participants using SMI eye tracking technology. Eye movements and gaze directions were monitored semi-automatically with a video camera.

We utilized the Tobii 1750 Eye Tracker and EEG to evaluate various stimuli on a desktop display. For 25 years, we have relied on implicit research to gain a profound understanding of human experiences and motivations. In addition to traditional methods, we employ emotion analysis, skin conductance measurement, reaction time assessment, and eye-tracking techniques.

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An advanced stage of mobile eye tracking is represented by the Head-Mounted Pupil Labs Eye Tracker, which incorporates built-in webcams. The initial evolution from laboratory settings was webcam eye tracking using a camera installed on a PC, allowing for cost-effective and rapid measurement of gaze patterns.

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In 2005, the TV channel RTL 2 introduced Michael Schießl and Andy Heer to viewers in a documentary titled "Die Eye Tracker." The live experiment featured an early head-mounted eye tracker, illustrating the psychology behind supermarket shopping.

"Unseen is unsold" emphasizes that in a competitive market, capturing attention for a brand's product range is crucial. Eye tracking provides insights into consumer visual focus and their search and navigation behaviors, enabling a more customer-centric approach to shelf organization.

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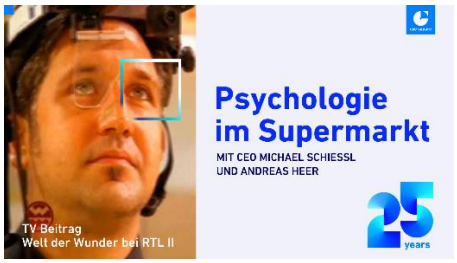
We employ eye tracking technologies for extensive multi-screen eye tracking ethnographies. Utilizing an innovative mobile setup that combines HD eye tracking, content recording, and coding, we have measured user behavior while watching television and using smartphones as a second screen.

Watch the Anniversary Video!



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