



University of St.Gallen

Institute of Behavioral Science  
and Technology

Annual Report

2024

Institute of  
Behavioral Science  
and Technology (IBT)

[ibt.unisg.ch](http://ibt.unisg.ch)

# Vision

« The Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St.Gallen (IBT-HSG), founded in 2021, is an interdisciplinary research institute that conducts high-impact research to understand, predict, and improve the human-technology relationship. Our vision is to contribute reliable and evidence-based scientific insights on how technology intersects with how humans think, behave, and decide. Our work has a measurable impact for science, public policy, corporate action, and society at large. »



Emanuel de Bellis



Christian Hildebrand



Clemens Stachl

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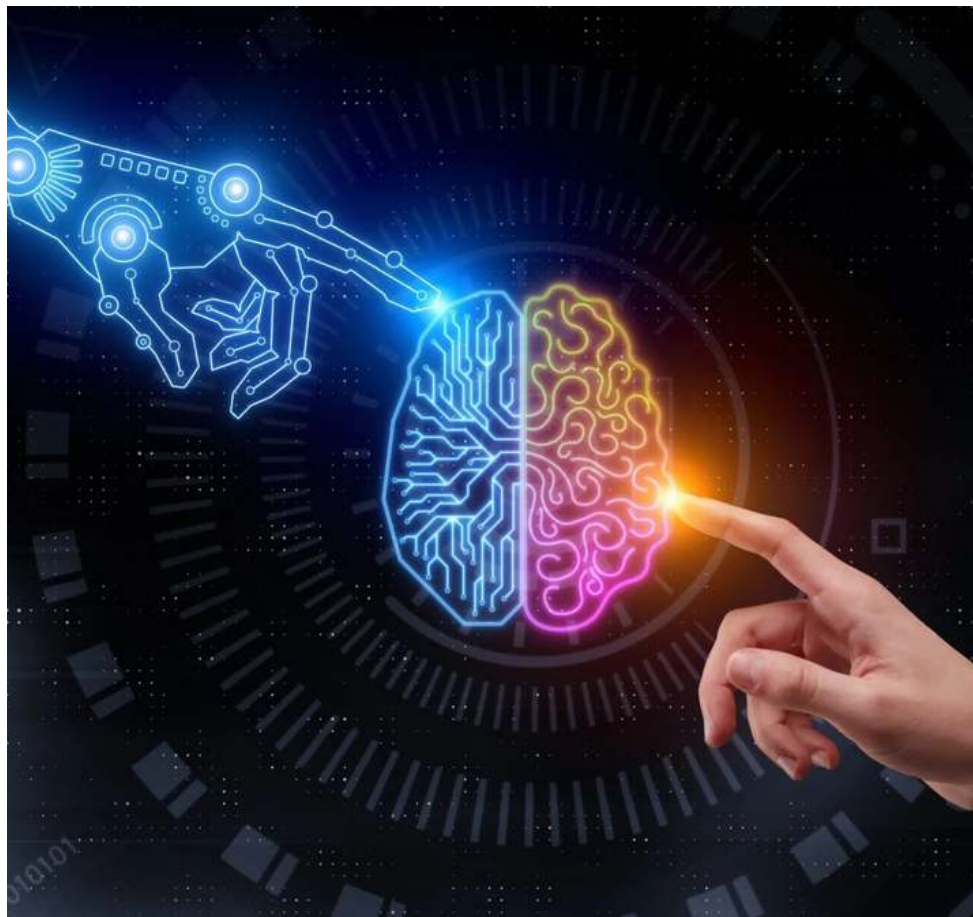
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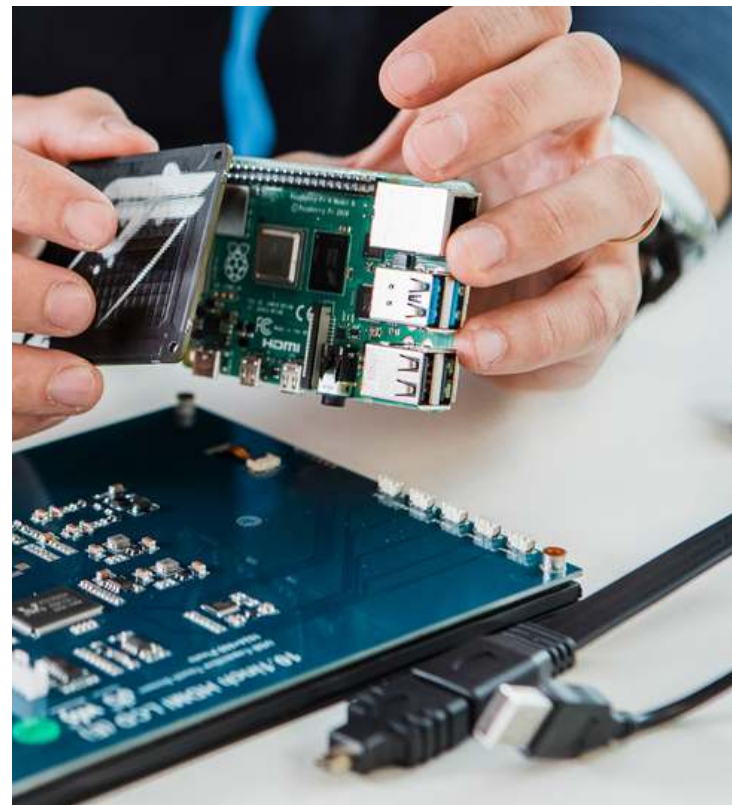
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Outlook



# Preamble

The Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology (IBT) at the University of St. Gallen celebrates a year of growth and achievement.

Already in 2023, we expanded to a team of four professors with the strategic addition of Tobias Ebert, whose interdisciplinary research integrates psychological, computational, and geographical sciences to examine how environmental factors influence human behavior. Tobias Ebert's expertise in predicting regional innovation activity and analyzing well-being metrics has strengthened our methodological capabilities and complements our existing research portfolio.

Our faculty continues to elevate their international standing, exemplified by Emanuel de Bellis' sabbatical at Rotterdam School of Management—Europe's premier marketing faculty—where he advanced his research on consumer responses to automation while strategically extending the IBT's academic network.

The IBT has demonstrated remarkable research productivity, with publications in prestigious journals such as the Journal of Consumer Research, Psychological Science, and Nature Communications. This scholarly output is supported by significant competitive funding, including several Swiss National Science Foundation grants and one German Research Foundation grant. Our academic influence is further evidenced by appointments to renowned Editorial Review Boards (e.g., Journal of Consumer Research, Psychological Science) and editorial leadership positions (e.g., Journal of Interactive Marketing, Frontiers in Computational Social Psychology).

We take particular pride in our doctoral students' achievements, from winning the SAMS Best Doctoral Presentation Award to successful academic placements, including Dr. Jenny Zimmermann at EDHEC Business School and Dr. Melanie Clegg at HEC Lausanne. Our alumni continue to secure positions at leading organizations, including PwC Consulting, Bain & Company, and TikTok User Research.

In addition, the IBT hosted a series of inspiring behavioral research talks open to all HSG researchers, featuring renowned international scholars who shared cutting-edge insights and fostered vibrant academic exchange within our community.

The IBT remains committed to educational excellence, delivering foundational methods courses across the university's key programs—from the Bachelor level to specialized Master's programs in Marketing Management and Computer Science, as well as the prestigious CEMS program. Our curriculum emphasizes rigorous, practical instruction that equips students with immediately applicable skills for both research and industry settings.

As you review this report, we invite you to share in our reflection on a year of substantial progress and our vision for continued impact in behavioral science and technology.

# Value Creation for HSG in 2024

## Acquired Competitive Funding

**CHF 1.6 Mio.**

## Key Projects

### SNF

- Actwell - CHF 801'602
- Financial Inclusion - CHF 306'050
- Regional Economics and Racial Prejudice
- Autonomous Products & Well-being

### DFG

- Residential Choice - EUR 177'706

## Key Industry Partners

**Loxo. SMYZE. Equalure.  
Vorwerk.**

## Number of Courses

**19 Bachelor, Master,  
PhD & Executive  
Courses**

## Ranking-Relevant Publications

**Journals: 12**

**Conferences: 20**

## Top Publications in Marketing and Behavioral Science

**4 articles**

## Development of Young Academics

**10 PhD Students**

**3 Post-Docs**

**2 Research Interns**

## Selected PhD Placements

**EDHEC Business School**

## International Scholars Visiting the IBT

- Noah Castelo (**University of Alberta**)
- Anne-Laure Sellier (**HEC Paris**)
- Rosa Ellen Lavelle Hill (**University of Copenhagen**)
- Julian de Freitas (**Harvard Business School**)
- Maarten Bos (**University of Southern California**)
- Andrés Gvirtz (**Kings College London**)

# Directorate



**Christian Hildebrand**  
Full Professor of  
Marketing Analytics



**Emanuel de Bellis**  
Associate Professor of  
Empirical Research Methods



**Clemens Stachl**  
Associate Professor of  
Behavioral Science

The IBT-HSG offers an interdisciplinary work and research environment that puts a strong emphasis on collaboration and continuous learning. We provide an inclusive environment across cultures, languages, and research traditions, employing people from multiple nationalities.



# Team



**Bianka Ledermann** | Admin



**Tobias Ebert** | Assistant Prof.



**Anouk Bergner** | Ph.D.



**Jan Digutsch** | Ph.D.



**Timo Koch** | Ph.D..



**Pietro Aluffi** | M.Sc.



**Max Bergmann** | M.Sc.



**Jonas Goergen** | M.A.



**Sophia Prix** | M.Sc.

# Team



**Anush Sridhar** | M.Sc.



**Philipp Winder** | M.Sc.



**Hauke Roggenkamp** | M.Sc.



**Jenny Zimmermann** | M.Sc.



**Michael Ohlinger** | M.Sc.



**Meike Zehnle** | M.Sc.



**Léa Toffel** | Research Assistant



**Livius Schoenle** | Research Assistant



**Sarah Müller** | Research Intern



**David Saeteros** | Research Intern



**Michele Russo** | M.Sc.



**Jana Berkessel** | Affiliated Researcher

# New Joiners



**Michael Ohlinger | M.Sc.**

Michael Ohlinger is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St.Gallen. His research interests combine personality psychology and geographical psychology with social data science. He is also interested in the assessment of psychological variables from text.

Michael received a B.Sc. in Psychology and a M.Sc. in Clinical and Cognitive Psychology at the University of Mannheim.

When not in the office, Michael enjoys sailing, skiing, and spending time outside.

# New Joiners



**Livius Schoenle**  
Research Assistant

Livius Schönle is a Research and Teaching Assistant at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St.Gallen.

He is interested in the intersection of psychology and marketing, with a particular interest in how behavioral insights influence consumer decision-making.

Livius holds a B.Sc. in Business Administration from the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts and is currently pursuing his Master's in Marketing Management at the University of St.Gallen.

When not studying, Livius enjoys different kinds of sport, preferably Handball or football.

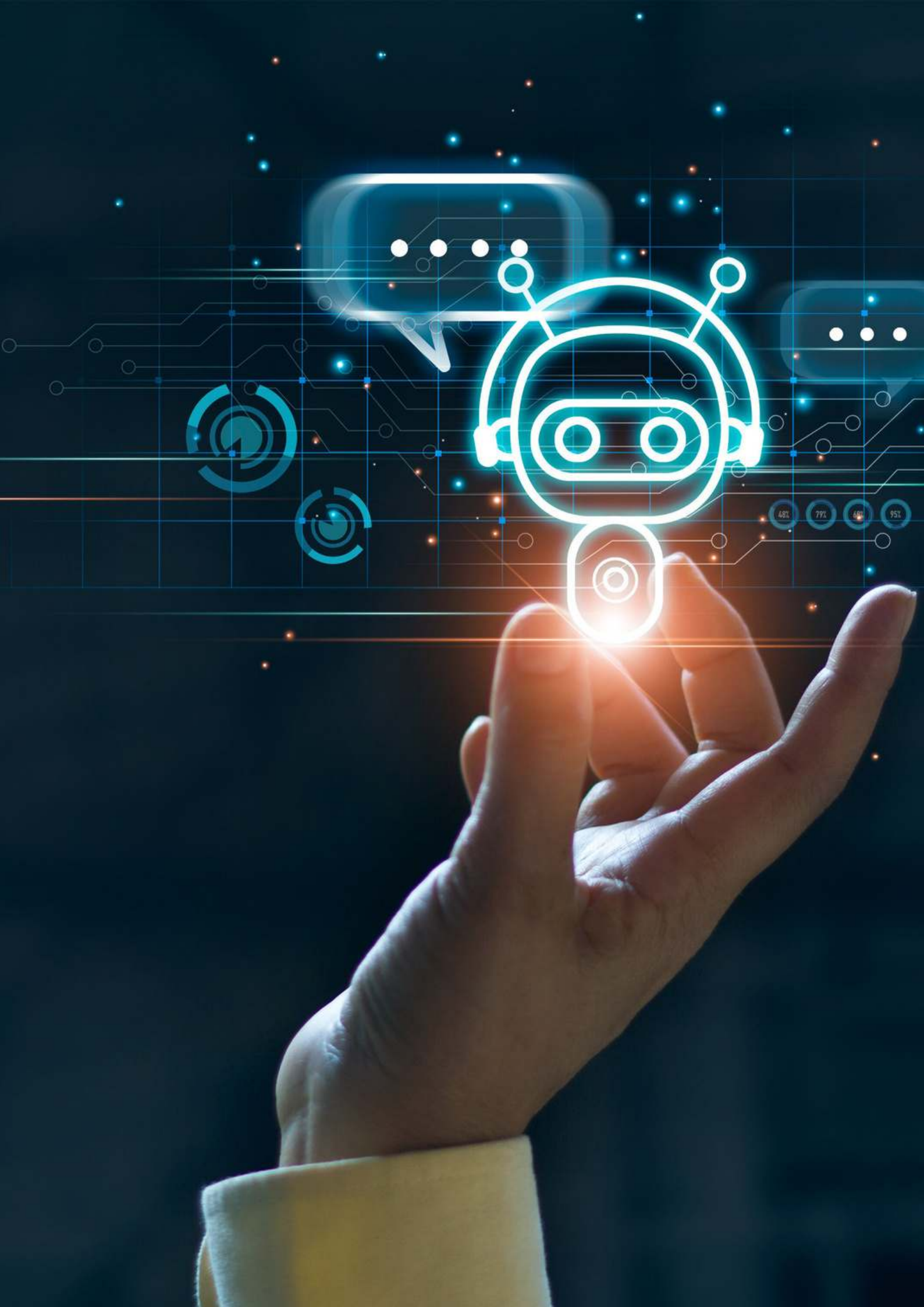
# New Joiners



**Michele Russo**  
external PhD candidate

Michele holds a Double Degree from Università Bocconi and the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (PGP - MBA). He's currently an Academic Fellow at SDA Bocconi, where he conducts empirical research and teaches topics such as Business Statistics, AI & Machine Learning, and Market Research at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Michele's research interests lie at the intersection of Natural Language Processing, Generative AI, and consumer behavior. At the IBT, he aims to deepen his understanding of using large language models to emulate human behavior.



*»Technology  
shapes  
and is shaped  
by human  
thinking,  
feeling  
and  
behaving»*

# Advisory Board



**Prof. Stefano Puntoni**  
University of Pennsylvania



**Prof. Rhonda Hadi**  
Oxford University



**Prof. Donna Hoffman**  
George Washington University



**Prof. Bernd Schmitt**  
Columbia University



**Prof. Martin Schreier**  
WU Wien

# Governing Board



**Prof. Damian Borth**

Professor of AI, School of  
Computer Science, University of  
St.Gallen



**Prof. Dietmar Grichnik**

Professor of  
Entrepreneurship, School  
of Management, University  
of St.Gallen



**Sergio Benavent**

Senior Consumer Insights Lead,  
Logitech



**Dr. Gregory Hitz**

Founder & CEO,  
Sevensense

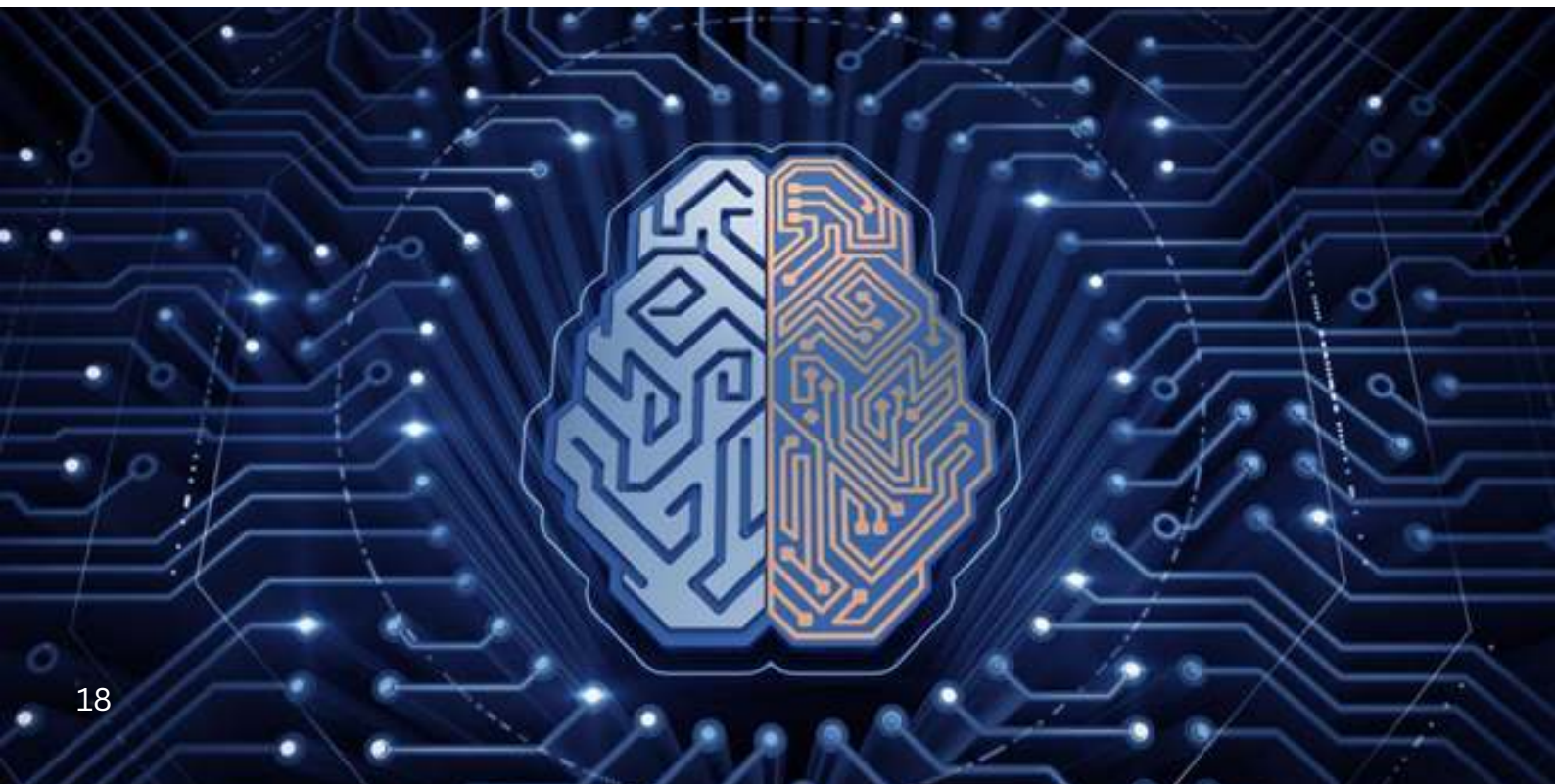
# Research Areas

## Autonomous Products & Robots

Technologies are becoming increasingly autonomous, from smart kitchen devices and robotic vacuum cleaners to self-driving cars and service robots. In fact, some scholars argue that we are about to move from the age of automation to the age of autonomy. Autonomous technologies can make decisions and complete tasks on behalf of humans, promising unprecedented levels of convenience and efficiency. At the same time, this novel class of technology endangers some fundamental human motives. At the IBT, we examine how these changes affect the relationship between humans and technology, which barriers to consumer adoption exist, and what the societal consequences may be in the long run.

## Conversational AI

The use of conversational AI ranges from text-based chatbots that automate service operations to voice-based interfaces such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home that take over everyday tasks in consumers' homes. Building on prior work in human-to-human communication and interpersonal psychology, we examine the impact of conversational AI on consumer decision making, consumer trust, and how to design competent while empathic conversational AI. We further examine how the proliferation of AI-enabled technologies that appear increasingly more human-like impact mind perception, entire markets, and consumer self-expression.





## Customization & Personalization

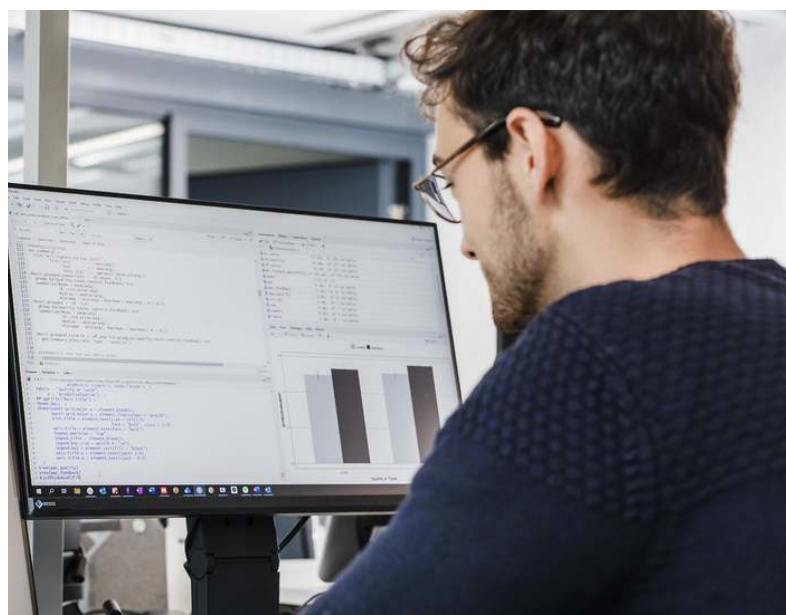
The combination of modern information technology and digital behavior offers new possibilities for tailor-made solutions in domains such as food, insurance, and ad targeting. On the one hand, an increasing number of firms allows individuals to self-customize their own products according to their specific preferences. On the other hand, websites are personalized to customers' implicit wishes and needs by leveraging large amounts of customer profile data. At the IBT, we explore these two central one-to-one marketing concepts—customization and personalization—and examine both their benefits and risks for individuals and companies.

## Location Insights

Many of both business and everyday decisions depend on where things happen. Questions like where to live, where to shop, or where to start a business, all revolve around space. At the IBT, we try to understand how areas differ considering factors like proximity, movement patterns, and the vibe or culture of a place. Using digital data sources, we are interested in how location insights can be used to foster human well-being and decision making.

## Geographical Psychology

Whenever we travel to a new city or country, we notice that different places carry their own distinctive vibe. At the IBT, we try to make these hidden differences between places visible. To do so, we collect large-scale psychological data to study the spatial distribution of psychological attributes at fine-grained scales (e.g., how are personality traits distributed across and within cities?). In interdisciplinary research teams, we seek to understand how such geo-psychological differences come about and how they relate to economic development (e.g., where innovations or new companies emerge and gain traction).





## **Mobile Sensing & Behavioral Metrics**

Mobile phones are the most personal device in many people's lives. While phones once were only used for communication, the technical sophistication of modern smartphones provides users with a wide range of functionalities. Many of these functionalities allow users to do things on their phone anytime and anywhere. These functionalities rely on an array of sensors and logging routines that can also be used to measure when and where people do certain things. Sensor-based behavioral metrics are increasingly being used to identify, describe, and characterize individuals and their activities. At the IBT, we investigate how mobile sensing can be used to study human behavior, decisions, as well as the environments and situations people spend time in.

## **Personality Computing & Assessment**

In addition to situational aspects, the personality of a person is one of the most important characteristics to understand and anticipate behavior. Personality also plays a key role in people's everyday decisions, preferences, and experiences. At the IBT, we study how personality is expressed in everyday behavior and how machine learning can be used to understand, assess, and conceptualize personality and individual differences.

## **Voice & Speech Analytics**

Oral communication extends beyond the mere words we utter to encompass the subtleties of our delivery. Often, the way we speak holds more significance than the words themselves. Elements such as tone, pitch, rhythm, and the subtle nuances in our voice serve as windows into our emotions, identity, and mental state. Analyzing the voice allows us to further understand what individuals convey, allowing us to further understand them.

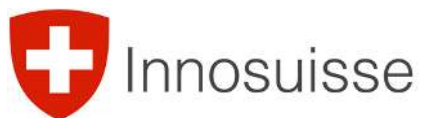


# Research Collaboration & Project Funding

## Public Funding Sources



## Private Funding Sources



# Research Collaboration

## Universities



**Erasmus  
University  
Rotterdam**



## Selected Project Funding

ACTWELL: Activities, Contexts, and  
Traits in Well-Being in Everyday Life  
Longitudinally



Autonomous Products and Consumer  
Well-Being



Economic Conditions and Racial Prejudice:  
A Regional Perspective



Personality and Residential Choice

Towards Inclusive AI: Leveraging  
Conversational AI to Reduce Risk Exposure  
of Marginalized Consumers



# Publications in 2024

Berkessel, J. B., Ebert, T., Gebauer, J. E., & Rentfrow, P. J. (2024). On the unequal burden of obesity: Obesity's adverse consequences are contingent on regional obesity prevalence. *Psychological Science*, 35(11), 1260-1277.

Clegg, Melanie, Reto Hofstetter, Emanuel de Bellis, and Bernd H. Schmitt. "Unveiling the Mind of the Machine." *Journal of Consumer Research* 51, no. 2 (2024): 342-361.

Ebert, T., Götz, F. M., Benet-Martínez, V., & Rentfrow, P. J. (2024). Introduction to the special issue on regional cultural differences and their consequences. *Current Research in Ecological and Social Psychology*, 7, 100204.

Efthymiou, F., Hildebrand, C., de Bellis, E., & Hampton, W. H. (2024). The power of AI-generated voices: How digital vocal tract length shapes product congruency and ad performance. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 59(2), 117-134.

Hermida Carrillo, A., Stachl, C., & Talaifar, S. (2024). A workflow for human-centered machine-assisted hypothesis generation: Commentary on Banker et al. (2024). *American Psychologist*, 79(6), 800–802.

Pargent, F., Koch, T. K., Kleine, A.-K., Lermer, E., & Gaube, S. (2024). A tutorial on tailored simulation-based sample-size planning for experimental designs with generalized linear mixed models. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 7(4).

Scharbert, J., Humberg, S., Kroencke, L., Reiter, T., Sakel, S., ter Horst, J., Utesch, K., Gosling, S. D., Harari, G., Matz, S. C., Schoedel, R., Stachl, C., Aguilar, N. M. A., Amante, D., Aquino, S. D., Bastias, F., Bornamanesh, A., Bracegirdle, C., Campos, L. A. M., ... Back, M. D. (2024). Psychological well-being in Europe after the outbreak of war in Ukraine. *Nature Communications*, 15(1), Article 1.

Winder, P., Hildebrand, C., & Hartmann, J. (2024). Biased Echoes: Generative AI Models Reinforce Investment Biases and Increase Portfolio Risks of Private Investors. *Available at SSRN*.

Minnich, A., Roggenkamp, H., & Lange, A. (2024). Ambiguity attitudes and surprises: Experimental evidence on communicating new information within a large population sample. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 228, 106778.

Brohmer, H., Hofer, G., Bauch, S. A., Beitner, J., Berkessel, J. B., Corcoran, K., ... & Athenstaedt, U. (2024). Effects of the generic masculine and its alternatives in Germanophone countries: A multi-lab replication and extension of Stahlberg, Sczesny, and Braun (2001). *International Review of Social Psychology*.

Ruggeri, K., Stock, F., Haslam, S. A., Capraro, V., Boggio, P., Ellemers, N., Berkessel J., ... & Willer, R. (2024). A synthesis of evidence for policy from behavioural science during COVID-19. *Nature*, 625(7993), 134-147.

## Selected Academic Conferences:

Ebert T., & Stachl. C. (2024, September). *Digital Data and Computational Approaches in Personality Psychology*. 53rd Congress of the German Psychological Association (DGPS), Vienna, Austria. Speakers: Friedrich M. Götz, Andrés Gvirtz, Tobias Ebert, Sarah Müller, Jan Digutsch, Ramona Schoedel, Eric Grunenberg, Maximilian Bergmann, Timo Koch, Clemens Stachl Chairs: Tobias Ebert, Clemens Stachl

Ebert T., Rentfrow, P.J. (2024, August). *Causes and Consequences of Cultural Variation in Personality: Insights from around the Globe*. European Conference of Personality 2024, Berlin, Germany. Speakers: Friedrich M. Götz, Sakshi S. Sahakari, Tobias Ebert, Jana Berkessel, Lucia L.-A. Boileau Chairs: Tobias Ebert, P. Jason Rentfrow

Ebert, T. (2024, October). *Person-culture match: Is living among similar others beneficial?*. McGill Psychology Seminar Series, Montreal, Canada.

Ebert, T. (2024, February). *Person-culture match: Is living among similar others beneficial?*. UBC Psychology Seminar Series, Vancouver, Canada.

Stachl, C. (2024, February). *In the Palm of Your Hand: Investigating Individual Differences with Mobile Sensing*. Talk at the Annual Convention of the Society for Social and Personality Psychology, San Diego, USA

Roggenkamp, H., Boegershausen J., Hildebrand, C. (2024, September). *Digital In-Context Experiments, a new experimental paradigm mimicking real-world social media feeds*. Association for Consumer Research Conference, Paris, France.

Winder, P., Hildebrand, C., & Hartmann, J. (2024). *Biased Echoes: Generative AI Models Reinforce Investment Biases and Increase Portfolio Risks of Private Investors*. 2nd Annual Business & Generative AI Workshop, San Francisco, USA

Zehnle M., Williams G., Hildebrand C., (2024, May). *When “Chatting” Backfires: Conversational Interfaces Reduce How Much Consumers Express Themselves*. European Marketing Association Conference, Bucharest, Romania.

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## Editorships:

Emanuel de Bellis

- Journal of Interactive Marketing (Associate Editor)
- Journal of Marketing and Technology (Editor)

Clemens Stachl

- Frontiers in Social Psychology - Computational Social Psychology (Associate Editor, Head Editor: Michal Kosinski)

Tobias Ebert

- Frontiers in Social Psychology - Computational Social Psychology (Associate Editor, Head Editor: Michal Kosinski)

## Editorial Review Boards:

Christian Hildebrand

- Journal of Consumer Research (*JCR*)
- International Journal of Research in Marketing (*IJRM*)

Emanuel de Bellis

- Journal of Consumer Research (*JCR*)
- Journal of Interactive Marketing (*JNM*)
- Journal of Political Marketing (*JPM*)

Clemens Stachl

- Psychological Science



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# THE PERSONALITY PUZZLE

ROUTLEDGE

Modern Psychometrics

CAMBRIDGE

SMARTPHONES WITHIN PSYCHOLOGY SCIENCE

ELLIS

Shmueli • Bruce  
Stephens • Patel

## DATA MINING FOR BUSINESS ANALYTICS

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McCullough

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DISCOVER THE POWER OF  
PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS

JOHNS WILEY & SONS

# Teaching

With nearly twenty courses and numerous contributions to courses offered by fellow HSG institutes, we aim to help learners at all levels to develop new skills and ways of thinking. Our teaching style is people-centered, interactive, and skill-oriented. Students describe our courses as challenging and requiring a high level of commitment, but they also perceive them as rewarding, contributing significantly to their professional development and critical thinking.

## Bachelor Courses

- Methods: Empirical Social Research (de Bellis)
- Sustainable Minds: Personality Insights for Effective Climate Action (Ebert)

## Master Courses

- Artificial Intelligence and Behavioral Science (CEMS; de Bellis, Hildebrand, Ebert)
- Behavioral Science & Technology (MBI; de Bellis, Stachl)
- Biostatistics (JMM; de Bellis)
- Consumer Behavior and Research Methods (MiMM; Hildebrand, Stachl, Scharfenberger )
- Introduction to Machine Learning in R (CEMS elective; Stachl)
- Machine Learning for Marketers (MiMM; Hildebrand)
- Marketing Analytics and Behavioral Insights (MCS; Hildebrand)
- Mobile Sensing and Behavioral Metrics (MBI; Stachl)
- Power of Place: How Locations Shape Business Innovation and Success (Master Elective; Ebert)
- Software Assessment: From Planning to Experimentation (MBI/CS; Schöning, Stachl, Weber)

## PhD Courses

- Basics in Experimental Research (PMA; de Bellis, Sirén)
- Research Seminar on Marketing & Behavioral Science (PMA; de Bellis, Hildebrand, Ebert, Stachl)
- Statistics with R (PMA; Hildebrand)
- Writing Excellent Dissertations in Marketing (PMA; Hildebrand)

## Executive Courses

- A/B Tests and Experiments in Practice (de Bellis)
- Analytics for Managers (Hildebrand)
- Customer Excellence in the Age of Data (Hildebrand)
- Modern Marketing: From Funnels to Dynamic Sales Loops (Hildebrand)
- Digitalization & Smart Data Analytics (Hildebrand)



# Ongoing Dissertations

**Maximilian Bergmann** is a Research Associate and PhD Candidate at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St. Gallen. His research focuses on how new technologies and computational methods can be leveraged to better understand and model human behavior, experience, as well as individual differences. In his current work, he is interested in human cognitive factors (e.g., abilities, traits, and momentary states), their manifestation in everyday life, and how they can be predicted from digital footprints (e.g., mobile-sensing data) by applying AI/machine learning techniques.

Max received a B.Sc. in Psychology as well as a B.A. in Sports Science and Business Administration from Eberhard-Karls University Tuebingen, as a scholar of the university's parallel degree program. He then achieved a M.Sc. in Psychology with a specialization in business-, organizational-, and applied social psychology.

**Jonas Gørgen** is a third year PhD student at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology, University of St. Gallen. He is interested in the intricacies of consumer responses to new technologies. In his projects, he is currently looking at how consumers construe their autonomy in relation to smart products, adapt their thinking when being hired by algorithms, and behave selfishly when owning unique NFTs.

Jonas received his B.Sc. in Business Administration from the University of Mannheim, spending a term at the University of Toronto. After that, he completed his M.A. in Marketing Management at the University of St. Gallen.



**Max Bergmann** | M.Sc.



**Jonas Goergen** | M.A.

**Michael Ohlinger** is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St.Gallen. His research interests combine personality psychology and geographical psychology with social data science. He is also interested in the assessment of psychological variables from text.

Michael received a B.Sc. in Psychology and a M.Sc. in Clinical and Cognitive Psychology at the University of Mannheim.



**Michael Ohlinger | M.Sc.**

**Sophia Prix** is a Research Associate and PhD Candidate at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St. Gallen. Her main research area lies in how new technologies can be leveraged to better understand and predict human behavior and psychological functioning. She is currently working on how human relationships can be transferred to autonomous products to increase performance and collaboration. Likewise, she is interested in how behavioral interventions potentially affect decision-making and consumer behavior, but also compliance and action-taking regarding sustainability.

Sophia received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Strasbourg. After that she completed a Master of Science in Psychology with a specialization in Social, Economic, and Decision-making Psychology at the University of Basel.



**Sophia Prix | M.Sc.**

**Hauke Roggenkamp** is a Doctoral Research Associate since June 2022 at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St Gallen, who is interested in the nexus of experimental economics, as well as behavioral and marketing science. Current projects of his focus (amongst other) on how voice modalities affect pro-social behavior through image concerns and trend hijacking on twitter.

Hauke received his B.Sc. in Economics from the University of Heidelberg, spending a term at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Subsequently, he completed his M.Sc. in Economics at the University of Copenhagen. Prior to joining the IBT, Hauke has been working as a web analyst. In addition, he investigated pro-social behavior under uncertainty as a Research Associate at the Cluster of Excellence “Climate, Climatic Change, and Society” in Hamburg.



**Hauke Roggenkamp** | M.Sc.

**Anush Sridhar** is a Research Associate and PhD Candidate at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St Gallen. His research interests include human-technology relationship and financial decision-making. Anush's current research projects involve exploring the behavioral consequences of owning unique NFTs, and investigating the perception and adoption of technologies over time.

Anush received his B.A. (Honours) in Economics from Christ University. Following that, he completed his M.Sc. in Behavioural and Economic Science from the University of Warwick.



**Anush Sridhar** | M.Sc.

**Philipp Winder** is a Research Associate and PhD Candidate at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology at the University of St. Gallen. His research focuses on behavioral finance and digital finance, examining how new technologies affect consumer financial behavior. Philipp seeks to shed light on how new technologies can be harnessed to effectively change consumers' financial behavior. In his current research projects Philipp focuses on the effects of deepfakes and cryptocurrencies on financial decision-making. He also investigates how digital footprints can help predict consumer financial decisions. In addition, Philipp is exploring the relationship between environmental variables, job satisfaction, and performance in the context of New Work.

Philipp received a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science from the Technical University Munich in Information Systems. Additionally, he received a Master of Science from the Technical University Munich in Technology and Management specializing in Finance and Accounting.



**Philipp Winder | M.Sc.**

# Defended Dissertations

**Jenny Zimmermann** has successfully defended her thesis, titled "The Age of Autonomy: Consumer Responses Toward Technology-Driven Phenomena", supervised by Emanuel de Bellis and Stefano Puntoni. Jenny Zimmermann is now a professor at EDHEC Business School in France. She studies consumer reactions to autonomous products.



**Jenny Zimmermann | Dr.**



**Meike Zehnle** successfully defended her Ph.D. thesis: Her thesis focuses on AI and its impact on consumer behavior, exploring this emerging field through a multifaceted approach. By combining lab and field experiments, meta-analytic techniques, and advanced AI tools, Meike investigates how conversational AI influences financial decision-making and examines the potential of chatbots to transform market research. This comprehensive methodology allows her to explore various aspects of AI's role in shaping consumer interactions and choices.



**Meike Zehnle | Dr.**



# IBT Highlights 2024

## 1 - Welcoming the ESKAS Scholars to the University of St.Gallen!

We hosted our annual welcome event for both new and returning students under the ESKAS (Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships) program in the HSG Living Lab at the Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology (IBT-HSG). Emanuel de Bellis being the University's ESKAS delegate. The event was an excellent opportunity for scholars to network, share their experiences, and build connections.



## 2 - High-Impact Publication in Nature Communications

The study "Psychological well-being in Europe after the outbreak of war in Ukraine", co-authored by Clemens Stachl, was published in **Nature Communications**, ranked among the **most downloaded articles of 2024**, and awarded with a **best paper award** by the International Society for the Science of Existential Psychology (ISSEP). The SRF covered the study in an interview with Prof. Stachl.

The findings show that, for many people across Europe, the psychological burden of the Ukraine war surpassed that of the COVID-19 pandemic. The war acted as a collective shock, significantly affecting mental well-being on a broad scale.

Fig. 1: Number of experience-sampling measurements in European countries between January 24 and March 27, 2022.



The number of measurements per country is indicated by the respective colour.

**nature communications**



### 3 - Recognition at the Swiss Marketing Science Conference 2024

At this year's Swiss Marketing Science Conference, Jonas Görden received the Best Doctoral Presentation Award for his talk

"Unique and Entitled: How Non-fungible Tokens Can Breed Selfishness in Online Communities".

In addition, Hauke Roggenkamp was awarded second place in the Impact Award, which honors research with strong practical and societal relevance.



### 4 - IBT Research Seminar Series with Noah Castelo

In March, we welcomed Prof. Dr. Noah Castelo from the University of Alberta as part of the IBT Research Talk Series. In his talk “New Perspectives on Algorithm Aversion”, he shared fresh insights into why consumers continue to prefer humans over algorithms—even as AI performance improves—and how these preferences are now increasingly shaped by concerns about social and economic fairness.

Noah Castelo is an Assistant Professor of Marketing whose research explores consumer psychology and technology. His work has been published in top journals and awarded by the Society for Consumer Psychology and the Psychology of Technology Institute.

## 5 - Guest Talk at Copenhagen Business School

In spring 2024, Prof. Dr. Christian Hildebrand was invited by the CBS Digital Marketing Research Cluster to present his research at Copenhagen Business School. His talk focused on conversational styles and AI experiences and sparked engaging discussions from both behavioral and analytical perspectives.

The visit was part of the Global Innovation Network Programme (GINP), supported by the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The exchange strengthened the international academic collaboration between University of St. Gallen and CBS.



## 6 - IBT Research Featured in Cover Story of Switzerland's Largest Consumer Magazine

In November, Coop Zeitung featured IBT's Tobias Ebert in a cover story on how our place of residence influences who we are. His research shows that where we live affects how we think, feel, and behave.

One key insight: Even in a mobile world, emotional ties to places remain essential for our sense of security and belonging.

A great example of how behavioral science connects with everyday life.





## 7 - IBT Research Seminar Series with Rosa Lavelle-Hill

In May 2024, we welcomed Rosa Lavelle-Hill, Assistant Professor in Social Data Science and Psychology at the University of Copenhagen, to the IBT Research Talk Series.

Her interdisciplinary work bridges psychological theory with big data and machine learning to better understand human behavior – particularly in the areas of sustainability, health, and social development. She is especially interested in how data-driven methods can challenge or enrich existing theories in the social sciences.

Rosa is also a visiting fellow at the Forum Basiliense at the University of Basel, where she explores how AI and algorithms influence human choices, agency, and perceptions of free will.



## 8 - IBT Research Seminar Series with Julian De Freitas

We had the pleasure to host Julian De Freitas, Assistant Professor at Harvard Business School, as part of the IBT Research Talk Series.

In his talk "Lessons from an App Update at Replika AI: Identity Discontinuity in Human-AI Relationships", he explored how users can develop deep emotional bonds with AI companions – in some cases even stronger than with human counterparts. Using a natural app update at Replika AI, he illustrated how changes in perceived AI identity can disrupt these bonds and impact user well-being and trust.

## 9 - DFG-Funded Research on Residential Choice

A new research project at IBT, led by Tobias Ebert in collaboration with Michael Ohlinger and international experts, explores how people decide where to live.

Funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), the project combines large-scale survey data with experiments to understand how psychological, demographic, and economic factors influence residential choices and shape communities over time.



## 10 - Team Retreat 2024

Our annual hiking retreat in the Alpstein has become a cherished IBT tradition. However, this year the weather had other plans.

Instead of heading into the mountains, we spontaneously switched gears and enjoyed a relaxed summer team event at the bowling alley.

While the setting was different, the spirit remained the same: taking time together to reflect, connect, and have fun as a team. Plenty of good conversations, laughter, and a few surprising strikes made it a memorable afternoon nonetheless.

## 11 - IBT Research Talk Series - Maarten Bos

In December 2024, we welcomed Maarten Bos as part of the IBT Research Talk Series. With over ten years of experience in both academic and corporate research labs—including Disney Research and Snap Inc.—he shared valuable insights into how businesses can benefit from behavioral science.

Through engaging examples from innovation-driven companies, Maarten highlighted the opportunities and challenges of conducting research outside traditional academic settings. His talk sparked lively discussion on how scientific methods can inform product development, strategy, and decision-making in the private sector.



## 12 - Invited Talk in Vancouver

In February 2024 Tobias Ebert was invited to give a talk at The University of British Columbia in Vancouver. In a beautiful lecture hall, he presented a line of research showing how the places we live in shape what makes us happy and healthy.

For example, he gave insights into how gravestone information can be used to show that religious people in some areas live longer than in others and also into a recent study in which he uses large-scale survey data to show that the consequences of obesity depend on regional weight stigma.



### **13 - IBT at the European Conference on Personality 2024**

In summer 2024, several IBT team members contributed to the European Conference on Personality (ECP) in Berlin, showcasing cutting-edge work at the intersection of personality psychology and technology.

- Clemens Stachl took part in an expert meeting on the conceptualisation and measurement of personality states, funded by the European Association of Personality Psychology (EAPP). The outcomes will be published in a joint position paper.
- Tobias Ebert co-chaired a symposium with P. Jason Rentfrow (University of Cambridge) on Cultural Variation in Personality and presented research on the link between partisanship and mortality across different cultural contexts.
- Maximilian Bergmann demonstrated how smartphone-based physical activity data and machine learning can be used to predict life satisfaction.
- Timo Koch discussed the use of AI in assessing individual differences and outlined new directions in algorithmic affect assessment.
- Michael Ohlinger presented research connecting AI and pop culture by predicting personality traits from text embeddings in sitcoms—showing how fictional dialogue can reflect deeper psychological patterns.

## 14 - IBT Research Seminar Series with Andrés Gvirtz

In December 2024, we hosted Andrés Gvirtz from King's College London. In his talk on "Geo-targeted GenAI Content", he presented findings from a pilot study showing how location-personalised AI visuals can improve attention and content retention.

His work combines personality data with spatial information to advance personalized communication at scale.



## 15 - Best Paper Award at ANZMAC 2024

At the ANZMAC 2024 Conference, Jonas Görden, Emanuel de Bellis, and Greg Nyilasy received the Best Paper Award in the Consumer Behaviour Track for their paper "Zero-sum Mindsets Explain Aversion to New Technology."

The study shows that consumers often perceive their relationship with technology as zero-sum—believing that gains by technology come at their own expense—which reduces adoption. However, aligning consumer and technology goals can help overcome this barrier.



## 16 - Conference Funding:

Tobias Ebert in collaboration with Canadian colleagues at UBC Vancouver and McGill University Montreal receives SSHRC Connection Grant to host an international conference.

Conference will happen in Vancouver in July 2025 and conference topics include Regional cultural patterns and their historical, cultural, and economic causes; Economic, social, and health impacts of cultural differences; Methods and data for studying regional cultures



## 17 - Farewell and Thank You – Pepe Sonderegger

In 2024, we warmly bid farewell to Pepe Sonderegger, who served as the “Götti” of the IBT. With his supportive spirit, strategic advice, and deep institutional knowledge, he played a key role in shaping the development of the institute. We thank Pepe sincerely for his commitment and valuable guidance –and wish him all the best for the future!



## 18 - Honorable Mention for the Ferber Award

We are delighted to announce that Anouk Bergner received an Honorable Mention for the prestigious Ferber Award by the Journal of Consumer Research. Her article “Machine Talk: How Verbal Embodiment in Conversational AI Shapes Consumer–Brand Relationships”—co-authored with Christian Hildebrand and Gerald Häubl—was recognized as one of the best dissertation-based publications in Volume 50 of the journal. The Ferber Award honors outstanding interdisciplinary contributions that combine scholarly rigor with accessibility. This recognition highlights the relevance of IBT research at the intersection of consumer behavior, technology, and communication.



# Outlook

The Institute of Behavioral Science and Technology anticipates a transformative 2025 focused on three strategic priorities: expanding our research initiatives, enhancing our educational offerings, and strengthening our global partnerships.

Our research agenda will be propelled by several major funded projects now entering their implementation phase. Clemens Stachl's ACTWELL project stands as one of the university's largest funded initiatives with over CHF 800,000 allocated to support multiple doctoral and post-doctoral positions. Additional research streams will investigate how autonomous products affect consumer well-being, examine the impact of AI-generated investment advice on financial decision-making, and explore how regional psychological characteristics shape residential choices and macro-economic development. We are also preparing significant grant proposals focused on AI assessment technologies and their implications for consumers and businesses.

On the educational front, we will enhance our presence in the Master of Marketing Management program through a newly designed Behavioral Science & Technology course, co-taught by Emanuel de Bellis and Clemens Stachl and new content for existing courses in the MiMM. This curriculum innovation reflects our commitment to integrating cutting-edge research into our teaching portfolio.

The IBT will also increase its institutional leadership, with Emanuel de Bellis joining HSG's new Senate Committee and Clemens Stachl representing the School of Management in the University's ethics committee. Additionally, Christian Hildebrand will spend his sabbatical at three renowned institutions—ESADE, Stanford, and Wharton—further expanding the IBT's international academic network.

We plan to deepen our industry partnerships through collaborative research initiatives and will publish the Smart Products Report 2025. These industry connections, alongside our academic partnerships across Switzerland, Europe, and beyond, will create a dynamic ecosystem that enhances our research capabilities while providing students and faculty with an intellectually stimulating environment.

In alignment with HSG's guiding principle, "From Insight to Impact," we remain dedicated to producing research that advances theoretical understanding while generating practical applications that benefit society.



## Impressum

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