

00:00 (air whooshing)
00:01 (upbeat music)
00:04 - It's called the X-Lab, and the only place you'll find it
00:07 is here at Suffolk University's Sawyer Business School.
00:10 Hello and welcome to "The On-Ramp," an ongoing series
00:13 that highlights thought leadership
00:14 from the Sawyer Business School in Downtown Boston.
00:17 My name is Payton Geraghty, and today I'll be speaking
00:19 with marketing professor Mujde Yuksel.
00:22 She's gonna tell us all about the X-Lab,
00:24 which gives students and faculty the opportunity
00:27 to study neuromarketing and human behavior.
00:30 Professor Yuksel, thank you so much for being here.
00:32 - Thank you for having me.
00:33 - First off, what is the X-Lab?
00:36 - So the X-Lab is a research facility
00:39 where we integrated physiological technologies
00:44 in doing research with consumers.
00:48 So those physiological technologies,
00:51 what we have in our lab are eye tracking,
00:55 then we have facial expression analysis.
00:58 We also have galvanic skin response,
01:02 which measures consumers' arousal levels.
01:06 We also just integrated an EEG device,
01:09 where we can collect some cognitive aspects
01:13 going behind the scenes when our consumers
01:17 meet with marketing stimuli.
01:19 - And what makes the X-Lab so unique?
01:22 - So the X-Lab is unique in the New England area.
01:26 There are, of course, like research facilities
01:28 with these kind of physiological measures
01:30 throughout in other universities as well.
01:33 But what we have done is actually integrate
01:36 this lab in our curriculum,
01:39 where we actually teach students how to use
01:44 these kinds of measures and data in market research.
01:48 So in that regard, we are the first university.
01:53 We are the first business school to do so
01:55 in the New England area.
01:57 - What inspired you to establish the X-Lab?
02:00 - Yeah, it is, I was actually,
02:01 like this way early, like 10 years ago even,
02:05 that the first time I was teaching
02:07 a marketing research class.
02:10 And it was interesting to see
02:13 like all throughout different classes,
02:15 we always work with consumer self-reported data
02:18 or their behavioral data
02:20 in terms of what they do digitally, right?
02:22 So we collect those kinds of data.
02:24 But there are certain aspects
02:27 that we cannot readily remember or correctly identify
02:32 when we are experiencing things.

02:35 So I was looking around different research technologies,
02:40 and actually here, right in Boston,
02:43 Downtown Boston, we have iMotions,
02:45 which is a good vendor for these kinds of technologies.
02:49 And I actually invited them just to showcase it in my class.
02:53 And my students loved it,
02:55 loved the showcase. (Payton laughing)
02:56 And it was so interesting to see something other
02:59 than just self-reported measures.
03:03 So from that day on,
03:05 I was always looking for ways to integrate this
03:08 within our educational efforts.
03:12 So I think like that was my first motivation,
03:15 to see that spark in my (laughing) students' experience,
03:18 yes. - That's awesome.
03:19 And why is it important to use this data for research?
03:23 - It is important in a way to
03:30 complement what we already know, right?
03:33 So we can actually detect like certain behaviors.
03:37 Then we want to know why they act in those certain manners.
03:43 And in order to be able to find that out,
03:46 then we usually survey consumers
03:49 or have them in focus groups or, you know,
03:53 talk to them in in-depth interviews.
03:55 But again, as I said earlier,
03:57 it is very difficult for consumers
04:00 to remember the things as they happen-
04:06 - Right. - After they consume things.
04:08 So there is always that little bias in our answers.
04:12 But also, in certain answers,
04:16 we have some social desirability bias
04:19 that, in a way, we answer those questions to look good.
04:25 So I think, like, these kind of measures actually gets
04:30 the more accurate aspects of our experiences.
04:35 - Are there opportunities for students to get involved
04:38 in the X-Lab?
04:39 - Yes, definitely, there are many ways (laughing)
04:41 that they can get involved.
04:42 First of all, like, I teach a neuromarketing course.
04:46 So the students, this is a graduate class,
04:49 but for these grad students,
04:51 they learn the ins and outs of these kind of technologies
04:55 and how to use them, how to collect data around them,
04:59 and how to analyze them as well.
05:01 But we also have lab assistants.
05:05 So every year, we have about six student lab assistant,
05:11 undergrad and graduate students.
05:14 And I actually train them myself on the technologies,
05:18 but also, we train them on like how to manage a lab,
05:23 how to deal with our participants in an ethical manner.
05:28 So they then do so many hands-on tasks
05:33 within the X-Lab.
05:35 They do the showcases.
05:37 I try to give them as much responsibility as possible,

05:42 basically, with the technology.
05:45 But in addition to that,
05:47 we also run studies, commercial and academic studies,
05:51 and also, my students run their own studies from the class.
05:56 So then we invite our students to participate
06:00 in the studies.
06:01 So they can also get involved and experience
06:04 these technologies as a study participant.
06:07 So yeah, there are many different ways to get involved.
06:10 - How can the X-Lab benefit businesses?
06:13 - So we actually, as a university,
06:16 do lots of client projects for our businesses.
06:22 And this is, in a way, to complement their efforts
06:26 of creating and crafting meaningful experiences
06:31 for their customers.
06:34 So in order to be able to do that, of course,
06:36 they need to know what works in a way
06:39 that does not cause friction
06:42 in the customers' experiences.
06:46 So there are many different ways that we do research,
06:50 but like, it could be a website,
06:52 it could be a packaging, it could be about an ad,
06:56 whether it creates excitement versus not.
07:00 So there are many ways that we can actually craft studies
07:05 for them, and of course,
07:08 they would need to book, 'cause we don't have much space
07:10 in our projects.
07:12 But we talk with them and cater it specifically
07:18 based on what their needs and interests are.
07:22 - What are some examples of businesses
07:23 that might use this kind of research?
07:26 - Yeah, so for instance, what we have done so far,
07:29 we have done a couple projects for ColdSnap-
07:33 - Okay. - Which is an interesting
07:38 ice cream machine that is like a Keurig
07:40 of ice creams. - Oh wow.
07:42 - Yes, and it's very sustainable too,
07:43 'cause you don't have to freeze the pods.
07:47 Basically, you can use them and it makes the ice cream,
07:50 like cold ice cream- - Okay.
07:51 - At the end.
07:52 But of course, like, this is a new concept,
07:55 and we wanted to see, for instance,
07:57 how consumers react to their pods.
08:01 Because it's canned ice cream,
08:02 so it's a novel concept.
08:04 So we did a packaging study for them.
08:08 Like when they encountered the packaging,
08:11 we did, they had two different designs,
08:14 an old design and a new design,
08:15 so we did like A/B testing on which performs better.
08:19 - [Payton] Okay.
08:20 - And we collected some eye tracking measures,
08:23 also like GSR levels, whether they were aroused

08:26 with that idea. (Payton laughing)
08:29 And they were also confused with that idea too,
08:31 ice cream in a can.
08:33 But it was a very interesting and fun study for us,
08:36 and they also loved our findings and insights
08:41 that we are still continuing to do studies for them.
08:44 - How does the lab address potential ethical concerns?
08:48 - There are like lots of measures that we put in place.
08:51 First of all, for instance, each lab assistant needs
08:55 to be trained in working with human subjects.
09:00 - Okay. - Subjects,
09:01 meaning our participants.
09:02 So we have a certain consent form that we establish
09:07 for each of our studies.
09:09 So of course, like we don't do any studies without consent.
09:13 But we also, like in addition to the lab assistants
09:18 being trained, for instance,
09:21 I teach in my class for the marketers
09:23 to use these kind of technologies in an ethical way as well.
09:29 - That's great. - So, of course,
09:31 with every technology, you can use it
09:34 in a more manipulating manner versus in a way
09:40 that you can actually create better experiences,
09:44 like better products and services
09:47 that your consumers can actually enjoy.
09:50 So I teach and I believe in the second one,
09:54 because then other, if you do it in a more manipulating
10:00 and tricking manner,
10:02 then it is a short-term transaction
10:04 and nobody will be happy at the end.
10:06 Because as a marketer,
10:07 you need to create a long-term relationship-
10:10 - Right. - With your consumer.
10:11 Otherwise you are not a good marketer.
10:14 - What does the future look like for the X-Lab?
10:16 Are there any new technologies or methodologies
10:19 you're planning to integrate?
10:20 - So we have just recently integrated the EEG.
10:24 So we're very excited about that.
10:26 'Cause in addition to, like, the emotions that we see
10:30 from the face or the arousal measures that we get
10:34 from the galvanic skin response, what we call the GSR,
10:39 and where they focus on the screen,
10:42 now we are able to measure more cognitive responses,
10:48 meaning we can get like more their attention,
10:51 whether they are interested or not.
10:54 So it will be an interesting,
10:58 it will add an interesting layer to our already fun studies.
11:02 But we are also interested in,
11:05 there is a new technology around voice analysis.
11:08 - Oh wow. - So we are thinking
11:10 to integrate that in the future too.
11:12 And from a capacity perspective,
11:16 'cause currently, we only have one data collecting station,

11:21 so the studies that we run are very limited in numbers
11:25 because of that- - Right.
11:26 - In a given semester.
11:28 So we want to increase the number of our hardware basically
11:35 to be able to run multiple studies
11:38 in a shorter period of time.
11:42 - Wow, that sounds like an amazing future for the X-Lab.
11:44 Professor Yuksel, thank you so much for being here.
11:47 - Thank you so much for having me.
11:49 - Thank you for joining us.
11:50 We'll see you next time on "The On-Ramp."
11:52 (upbeat music)