AN ODE TO EMOTIONS

Nirit Pisano, Ph.D.

◆ A group tasked with thwarting disinformation around the COVID vaccine sifts through public messages to determine their potential impact. Which is most threatening? Is it talk of a microchip secretly implanted in arms during vaccination? Rumors of the syringe containing a live virus? Or chatter of the rush job that disregarded proper medical practices in the development of each dose?

◆ A pharmaceutical company wonders about its doctors' inclination to prescribe or not prescribe a certain medication, perplexed as to why some healthcare providers display loyalty and others reluctance toward the very same product. The two groups appear entirely identical in background, practice type, clientele and experience, with the singular exception of their behavior around said drug.

◆ A police chief depicts his life-long mission of engaging community members day in and day out, absorbing their concerns and keeping a finger on the pulse of his constituents. He contemplates ways of highlighting the issues that matter most in a daily roll call, at least to the extent that they might incite violence and threaten the safety of his officers and citizens.

Cognovi Labs answers each of these challenges with a uniform clarity: that emotional experience lies at the root of human behavior, and its examination provides invaluable insights across time, place and person. Select ten emotions to extract from free-flowing conversations as we do at Cognovi Labs, and witness the public's emotional profile come to life. "Microchip" versus "live virus" rumors trigger starkly divergent sets of emotions, such that one spurs individuals toward action while the other induces a minimal motivational response. A community's emotional signature can similarly be traced in real time, with distinct affective patterns leading to a peaceful protest, a violent clash, or a fizzling out of the issue altogether. And when applied to the individual level, the avid prescriber of a certain drug shows unique emotional inclinations – whether discussing treatment options, work environment, or broader life experiences.

Studies of emotion in psychology, behavioral economics, neuroscience, sociology of affect, computer science and, more recently, "emotional economics" and "neuroeconomics," have exploded over the past few decades, contributing to a deep and interdisciplinary understanding of emotion as a complex construct. And yet, our emotions-based data at Cognovi Labs is often met with uncertainty and disbelief: emotions at the core of human behavior? Sounds "murky," "subjective" and "intangible," we are told. It is an understandable reaction, one that unfolds within the very fields that birthed and developed the hypothesis. Even amongst peers in the realms of psychology, neuroscience and economics, we encounter endless arguments for a conscious, rational, objective construction of the mind. And in the world of psychotherapy, where clinicians and patients gather in the trenches of human pathology, unmet needs and unexpressed desires, a divided camp exists between those who focus on conscious, practical solutions to present-day challenges, and those who encourage a dive into deeply-rooted, often unconscious aspects of self.

In reality, so much of our mental activity unfolds outside awareness that research across disciplines demonstrates the impact of unconscious, implicit or – in psychoanalytic terms – "latent" manifestations of behavior. The magnitude of unconscious processing is said to account for up to 90% of human decisions. Emotional undercurrents frequently exist in this realm: sensations that are too shameful, upsetting, or embarrassing to acknowledge, for example, are often tucked away, barred from immediate access to our conscious minds. Yet in their undigested, hindered state, their influence grows stronger with time. A psychotherapeutic treatment thus aims to address these unexplored parts, anchoring them within language and loosening their grip on internal experience. What originates in the unconscious can therefore be made conscious, deeming emotions pivotal in their freedom of movement across mental domains.

Cognovi Labs' psychological framework and the recommendations built upon supervised machine learning stem from this very understanding. Our freshly launched **Vaccine Attitudes** dashboard offers a glimpse into these capabilities.

Emotion Artificial Intelligence allows us to extract emotional elements as they arise, contextualized by awareness level, trends over time and geolocation differences. We analyze (explicit) content that individuals and groups communicate, and (implicit) emotional motivators and blockers that interfere with optimal functioning. Finally, we identify relevant words, narratives and messages that provide an entry point for articulating patterns and facilitating growth. In essence, we witness what people say and how they say it – alongside what they do not say and why they do not say it – while continually mirroring back the dynamics at play. By prioritizing individual and collective affective expressions, we welcome the space between conscious and unconscious, reason and instinct, objective and subjective experience. And we do so with our own unique repertoire of emotions.

Dr. Nirit Pisano is a licensed clinical psychologist and Chief Psychology Officer at Cognovi Labs.

Cognovi Labs is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) company that fuses machine learning with behavioral psychology to predict and shape behavior, and thereby drive differentiated business growth for its clients. The company's award-winning COGNOVI EMOTION AI™ tracks the topic-specific emotional undertone in widespread conversations and provides a deep understanding of people's decision-making process. The Emotion Trigger Marketing (ETM) platform then helps execute a full-cycle digital marketing and communication process to trigger the precise emotions that lead to an improved outcome.