



**“Are we much alike now?”**

**An in-depth investigation concerning fanatical football fans under  
2018 FIFA World Cup**

Inspired by the 2018 FIFA World Cup

Group Name: WFLA Enlighteners[T002]

Shanghai World Foreign Language Academy, Lu Cheng

Shanghai World Foreign Language Academy, YanHao Chen

Shanghai World Foreign Language Academy, YiJia Huang

Shanghai World Foreign Language Academy, Chi Jiang

Shanghai World Foreign Language Academy, YiFeng Wang

Shanghai World Foreign Language Academy, TongXu Zhang

Have you noticed that more and more of your WeChat friends were posting their favorite football team in the midnight? Have you realized in a flash that there were so many loyal football fans among your friends who stay up late, waiting for the results of the ongoing FIFA World Cup, leaving no single match behind? Have you noticed that the focus of your social media's updates suddenly shifted to this worldwide event? And, more essentially, have you meticulously searched for the reasons why these people became so enthusiastic these days?

*RongZhen Gu, a 16-year-old student living in Xuhui, the central area of Shanghai, caught the World Cup fever as many other football fans during the 2018 FIFA World Cup. However, as a “fanatical fan”, her understanding of football were merely based on superficial knowledge; indeed, she is not qualified to be categorized into those “real” football fans.*

*Photo1. RongZhen Gu, who was posting a picture of a football star to her friends.*

*(Photographed by YanHao Chen, at RongZhen Gu's house in Shanghai, July 23, 2018)*



However, RongZhen Gu did strive to pretend herself as an adept in football. She extremely values and worries about the comments and reactions of her friends when talking about FIFA World Cup. In her opinion, acting as an authentic and fanatical football fan has been quite a prevalent and efficient way of socializing and making herself more gregarious.

“Devoting myself into watching the FIFA World Cup gives me a sense of belonging, increasing the intimacy between my friends and me.”

RongZhen Gu is not alone among the numerous “bandwagon fans” worldwide. Bandwagon fans in this case could be defined as people who don't care about football contests at all during normal times but suddenly stay up late, beginning to watch FIFA World Cup and unreasonably becoming a football team's “loyal” supporter. This group of people, just like her, are largely unacquainted with football but act unbelievably fanatical during the FIFA World Cup.

Yi Lin, a 44-year-old white collar, confessed that the original intention of watching football is to keep up with the latest trend. “All of a sudden, everyone around me begins to talk about this FIFA World Cup. I become really afraid that if I don’t watch the games or don’t have a favorite team to pick, I would be unfairly left out of others’ discussion.”

According to Yi Lin, with the arrival of the FIFA World Cup in 2018, she was actually stressed out. “People will be surprised at your unfamiliarity with football, which forces you to disguise yourself as a fanatical fan.”

Being fearful of receiving possible queries from her friends, Yi Lin was bothered quiet a lot. Actually, when she talks with her friends over and again about the World Cup, she always acts very prudently, striving to cater to others’ viewpoints.

### **A deeper observation**

Both Yi Lin and RongZhen Gu’s situations can be attributed to “the fear of being lost, or being isolated from other people”, which is also connected with the “Bandwagon effect.” Dr. Kruger, a specialist in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), claims that human beings have a natural tendency to maintain their connection with other people. “The fear of being ‘lost’ also adds to people’s unusual craze during World Cup.”

Incontrovertibly, fear of being left alone is one of the main reasons why one tends to align with the majority. In the case of the bandwagon fans in football, the transition from an utter indifference towards football contests to the emergence of a sudden passion for them can be explained as chasing after the growing desire for social conformity, which means they are yearning for a common language between them and other people.

Just as Dr. Kruger suggests: “Fear acts as one of the biggest stimulants for the bandwagon effect to roll on. If our mind is not clouded by fear, we tend to think clearly and logically. We are less likely to follow others blindly if our decisions are based on proper reasoning.”

This suggestion corresponds to Yi Lin’s misgivings, indicating that “fear” plays a decisive role, or probably a structurally fundamental drive, in people’s behaviors. Will people have the same “fear” and blindly follow others under other circumstances? In order to have a deeper understanding of the relationship between fear and bandwagon behaviors in people’s daily life, our group devised an experiment to observe the reactions of different subjects.

Will you feel nervous and lonely when you find unfamiliar topics on social softwares?

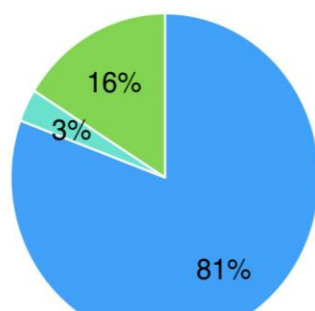
添加问卷说明

- will search for more information to keep up with the others
- will not feel any emotion
- will feel a little anxious but it's not a big deal

Graph1: A sample question from our questionnaire.

In our experiment, we designed and distributed questionnaires through WeChat and QQ and conducted random interviews among 10 passers-by. In the questionnaires, we devised some simple questions concerning people’s daily performance in order to assess their feelings, attitudes and reactions when they appear to be different than other people.

- will search for more information to keep up with the others
- will not feel anything
- will feel a little anxious but it's not a big deal



Graph2: This graph shows the result of the question about people’s feelings, attitudes and reactions towards unfamiliar topics and words on social media.

In our fifteen-question-questionnaire, one question had a very interesting result among the respondents—“Will you feel nervous and lonely when you find unfamiliar topics or words on social media?” This caught our attention as the question led to polarized results. As the questionnaire

result suggests, about 81% of the respondents will search for more information to keep up with the others, whereas merely 3% of them claim to feel only a little anxious but claim it's not a big deal.

“Take myself as an example, I always download the same app my friends have had or buy the same style of clothes they have bought,” said YiLin Wang, one of the respondents of our experiment, “I think this is an indispensable tool which enables me to keep up with the trend instead of being lost from others.”

### **A greater outlook**

The FIFA World Cup in 2018 very well demonstrated people's fear of being lost and their longing for gaining acceptance from other people by imitating the desire of other people in the modern society. It can be discovered that the bandwagon effect actually manifests itself in many aspects of our daily life imperceptibly changing the way we live and gradually influencing the world around us.

The main factor that leads to people's fear is that they are often trapped by their compulsive overreaction, or excessive response, to other's behaviors. What usually follows is a particular pattern of conduct which becomes established and justified in the society, and people will start view it as “a norm”, conforming to it as it gives the impression of being the “right” thing to do. This phenomenon intuitively causes a self-reinforcing feedback loop, surrounding every aspect of our society like an infinite chain, in which we are the agents that maintain its existence by imitating the behaviors of one another continuously, passionately and fearfully.

Just as our research has shown, bandwagon effect is, to a certain extent, inevitable and prevalent. This may partly due to the popularization of internet or the fast-paced lifestyle in modern society, which deprives people of their time to think reflectively about the motivation and originality of their own behaviors. Still, people can try to overcome it by inwardly finding their unique and authentic passions and talents by being more confident instead of blindly following others. In this way, a greater sense of belonging may be generated because one is now convinced of

and belongs to the existence of a self-asserted personal identity instead of a merely imitation, or a pitiful copy, of other people.

As for RongZhen Gu, her life is now enriched and fulfilled with literature, tennis and films—hobbies she truly appreciates. “I’m so happy that I finally get rid of the football and become myself!” She said confirmedly.