

World Cup study shows group fervor stems from shared experiences

July 10 2014, by Garriy Shteynberg



The 2014 World Cup has captured the attention of billions of viewers around the globe. New research from UT suggests that it is the shared attention that makes these games so emotionally compelling.

Assistant Professor Garriy Shteynberg and Associate Professor Jeff Larsen from the Department of Psychology conducted the study, which showed that [emotional events](#) are more intense when viewed simultaneously with other group members.

"Watching an event together with a group has a powerful impact on the way we process information," said Shteynberg, the study's lead author. "We tend to pay more [attention](#) and feel the experience more deeply,

leading it to have a more lasting impact on us."

Across five studies, published in the journal *Emotion*, the researchers found that watching an event simultaneously with a group produced stronger emotional reactions than watching the same event alone, or watching it even a minute apart. Regardless of whether the initial event was a positive or negative one, these feelings were more intense when there was joint attention to the event.

"Group attention effectively intensified the emotional experiences of the study participants," the researchers said. "It made people happier in response to positive information and sadder in response to negative information."

The research suggests that [emotional experience](#) will be heightened only when attending vents with others simultaneously.

"The effect of shared attention is only present when you are watching at the same time as others," Larsen said. "If you are watching after the fact, you don't get the same effects."

These shared emotional experiences also have effects on our behavior. For example, [study participants](#) were more likely to donate money to a charity after jointly viewing a video about homelessness compared to watching it alone.

"Shared attention helps drive the excitement of a massive event like the World Cup," the researchers said. "We feel the events more intensely because we know that we are watching it with our fellow fans, regardless of where they are around the globe."

Provided by University of Tennessee at Knoxville

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