

# MY GAME OF THRONES: AN AUDIENCE SELF-PORTRAIT

A Study By **Latitude°** using *lumière* Echo®

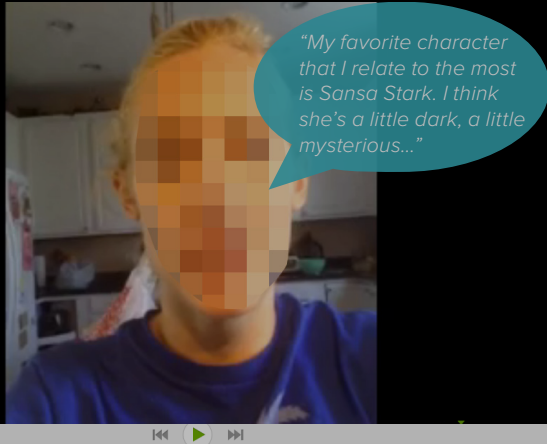
Latitude°



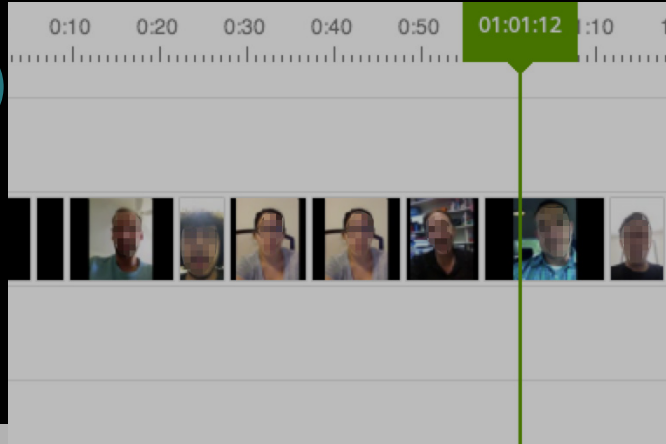


# WE ASKED 220 GAME OF THRONES FANS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES TO TELL US WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO BE A FAN, AND WHAT KEEPS THEM COMING BACK FOR MORE.

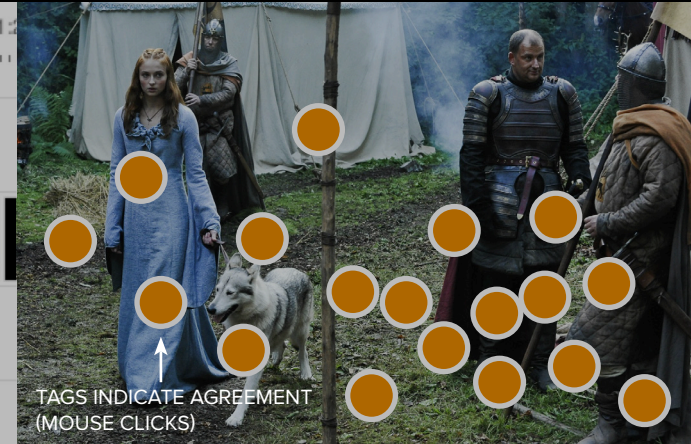
## 1 FANS RECORD THEMSELVES ANSWERING QUESTIONS



## 2 WE COMPILE A MINI-DOCUMENTARY ACCOUNTING FOR A VARIETY OF RESPONSES



## 3 OTHER FANS WATCH VIDEO AND INDICATE THEIR AGREEMENT WITH OPINIONS EXPRESSED



Game of Thrones has, almost unexpectedly, become a worldwide hit over the past few years. What's driving the intense loyalty and social interactions of fans? How do people who love the program connect to the unique world of GoT and to the multi-faceted characters in it?

As part of our ongoing series of open studies on media and technology, we decided to explore these questions, with the ultimate goal of gaining a deeper understanding of how compelling series like GoT can reach, and retain, loyal audiences.

Latitude asked 220 Game of Thrones fans to help us understand what truly makes the show such a huge hit. First, we asked 20 people to tell us

about their routines and rituals around the HBO show – all through self-recorded video. Next, we compiled their responses into a mini-documentary and presented it to a larger audience of fans (n=200) via our cloud application, [Lumière](#). As they watched the collage of input, these fans interactively provided their own feedback regarding the ideas expressed.

What follows is a story of Game of Thrones fans and the characters they enjoy on-screen. This colorful portrait of fandom showcases the connections between people off-screen that can be facilitated by people on-screen, and can be applied to audiences across genres and around the world.

LOCATION OF STUDY:

38° / 53' : UNITED STATES

TIME OF STUDY:

JULY 2014

METHOD OF STUDY:

ECHO®  
(COLLABORATIVE VIDEO ETHNOGRAPHY)

# DIVING UNDER THE CROWN - VIEWER PSYCHOLOGY

*Why do you watch Game of Thrones?*



**1** **MEDIEVAL, FANTASY WORLD REIGNS OVER ME** The world of Game of Thrones provides a rich backdrop that grounds what are ultimately very realistic characters. The majority (54%) of fans agreed that their top reason for watching is the show's setting: a medieval fantasy with elements of sci-fi, witchcraft, and magic. The combination of the epic and the intimate, real and unreal, in this world allows the audience to bathe realistic characters in larger-than-life scenarios.

**2** **SURPRISE MAKES VIEWER HEARTS GROW FONDER** Unpredictability is almost always a plus in television, but not always truly present; GoT has it in spades. The result: a sense of living with and like the characters in the often harsh world of Westeros, never knowing what's really around the bend. While fans who read the book series and watch the show "intensely" know some of the story paths, the majority of viewers have become invested in the fears and hopes of the characters in this unpredictable narrative space.

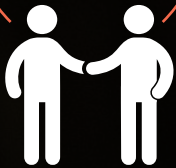
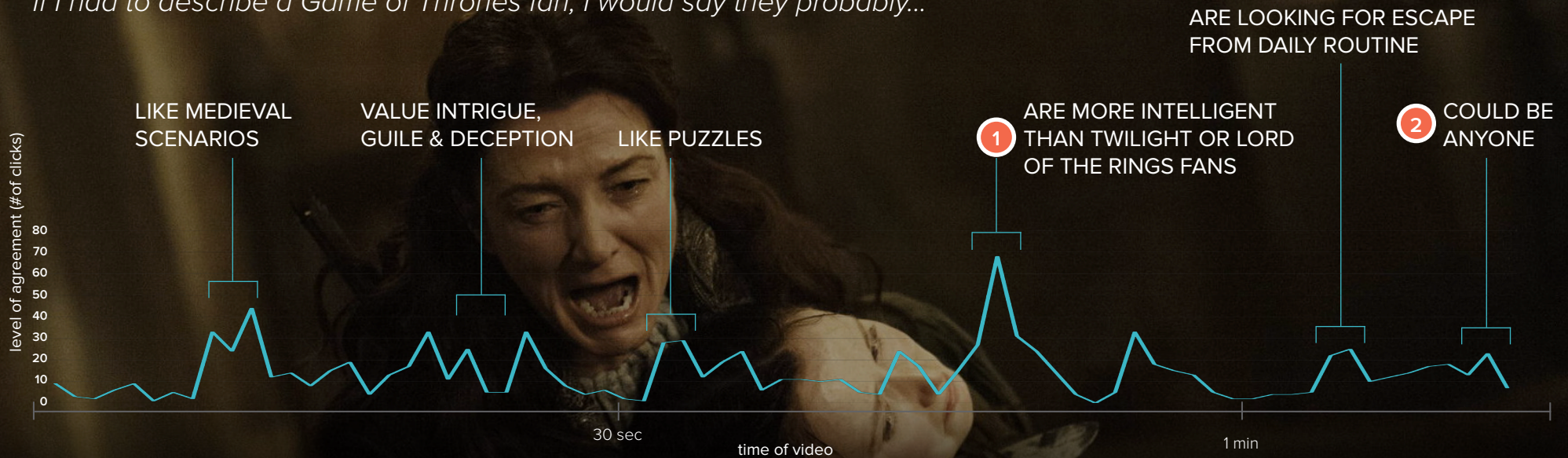
**3** **LOATHING ALL LANNISTERS...EXCEPT TYRION** Fans that are more "intense" about their viewing are also more nuanced in their reasons for watching. While the average viewer is more concerned with unpredictability and the latest killings, these more loyal fans sink their teeth deep into character ambiguity and complexity. Tyrion Lannister has become a focal point within this trend - even if he's not their "favorite," he exemplifies the strong and complex middle ground that lies between protagonist and antagonist.

**4** **CHARACTERS THAT TWIST AND TURN, AND GROW** Almost every character that appears in GoT immediately feels three-dimensional. But their ultimate appeal is linked to the unpredictability of the storylines - the characters do the truly unexpected in many situations. What's even more powerful is that they're capable of real movement and change; nearly half (44%) of respondents agreed that this quality was the main reason to pick favorites and in turn this character loyalty only creates deeper audience loyalty over time.



# GETTING INTO CHARACTER

*If I had to describe a Game of Thrones fan, I would say they probably...*



**DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH CHARACTERS FORGE  
MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FANS**

**1 FANS ARE AS COMPLEX AND WELL-ROUNDED AS THE CHARACTERS** Amongst all audience descriptors, the one that rang true for most was “more intelligent than Twilight fans, or even Lord of the Rings fans.” GoT fans are proud of their IQ, but much like characters on the show, their qualities are far from one-note. They’re also imaginative, adventurous, and value intrigue and deception as much as the next Lannister. Game of Thrones has created an elegant and narratively-rich match of viewer and character that, in the end, allows individuals to relate to the show and to each other in deeper ways than is the case with series that have more superficial character development.

**2 GAME OF THRONES IS MAINSTREAM...BUT DO FANS THINK SO?** Game of Thrones has an average of over 18 million viewers per episode (by comparison, the Sochi Olympics earlier this year had just over 20 million per night). But despite GoT’s widespread popularity, less than a third of people thought that fans “could be anyone really.” Those who read the series were even less likely to agree that the show is mainstream, and the regularity / intensity of viewing did not affect this statistic. Viewers shy away from calling the show mainstream because of the intimate relationships they are able to form with the show’s characters, and thus, with each other. With such a large viewership, GoT fans still act, move, and socialize like a much more niche audience.



# FOUR CLANS OF VIEWERS

Just as the show's characters are diverse in their habits and traditions, from House Lannister and House Tyrell to Houses Stark and Targaryen, the Game of Thrones audience cannot be personified by a lone image - for instance, the diehard medieval fanatic who has worn out copies of the book series. In deference to that fact, we decided to look at the audience through multiple lenses. The following are some of the more prominent groups that emerged, differing in their engagement and socialization around the series.



*those who watch intensely and read the book series*



*those who watch regularly and don't read the book series*



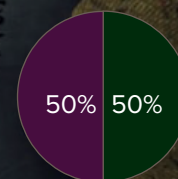
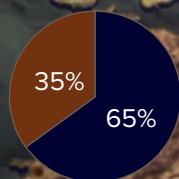
*those who typically watch the show alone*



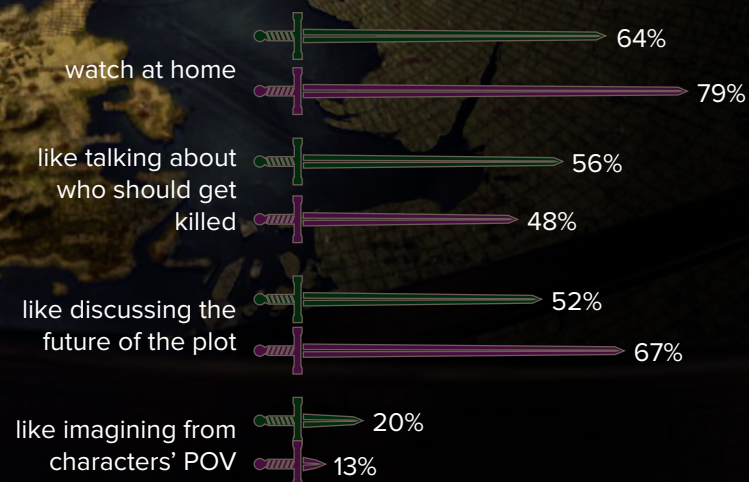
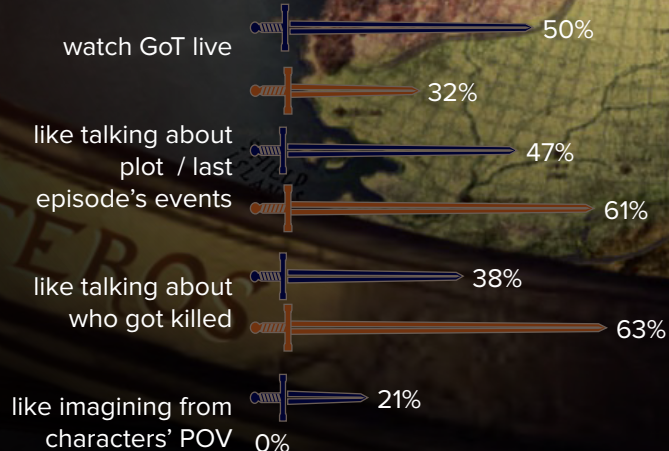
*those who typically watch the show with others*

## WHO THEY ARE

## PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL



## BEHAVIORS & SOCIAL







# INSIGHTS FOR GoT

**MAESTERS OF MANY HOUSES.** Game of Thrones fans always seem to have an opinion, even regarding experiences that are not their own. For instance, live viewers enjoy explaining the mindset and behaviors of delayed viewers, and vice-versa. This audience characteristic is an indicator of its size and its propensity for social interaction; as people discuss the show with friends and family, they solidify information about experiences around the show that might be contrary to their own.

**TRIAL BY (SOCIAL) COMBAT.** Game of Thrones has an abundance of complex characters, many of whom have found their faithful fans. Even among the twenty people who recorded footage for us, seven different favorite characters were offered, a sign that there is someone in the show for everyone who watches. There is a powerful social opportunity here, to have these factions interact and debate with each other, ally with others against each other, etc. The initiative would provide fans with some healthy competitive spirit and provide HBO with some potentially significant insight on social behavior around the show.

**FLIGHT OF THE THREE-EYED RAVENS.** As it turns out, reading the books may remove the surprise, but not the enjoyment of the show. While non-readers insist that they enjoy the TV show more, those who have read the books can claim both a richer understanding of character relationships and can enjoy seeing non-readers' reactions to unpredictable moments while watching or discussing together. Readers of the Game of Thrones series "see deeper," shifting their impetus to watch away from plot development and more toward immersive experiences and a realization of their in-depth knowledge.

**INVESTED IN WESTEROS.** Especially for those who like to immerse themselves in the environment of Game of Thrones and personify its characters, a seasonal schedule or weekly episode should only be part of the journey. Providing content in the digital world, but also more content in the real world, allows these fans to play and explore. Incidentally, it not only makes live show viewing more of an inevitability, but also a further esteemed, highly anticipated event.



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STORYTELLERS

**NICHES ARE THE NEW MAINSTREAM.** Don't be wary of sci-fi / medieval scenarios or other subjects typically reserved for niche followings. With an ever-growing array of networks and viewing options, programmers and producers realize that dedicated smaller audiences can be positively evangelistic in their level of engagement - and even lay the groundwork for potentially bigger hits.

**RECOGNIZE THE POSSIBILITIES OF CASTING A WIDER NET.** The success of Game of Thrones can be attributed to its numerous storylines and multidimensional characters, all placed within a specific, unique universe. Creating real variety and abundance of people and plotlines in the same series attracts diverse audiences that can latch onto different elements to fuel their fandom.

**ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION (BUT DON'T TRY TO CONTROL IT).** Social interaction is a boon for a TV program. Execs will often, though not always successfully, try and guide the conversation through a few desired channels. Do more to encourage social behavior around a show wherever and however it may exist – in social media and blogs, at real-world events, through artistic pursuits, etc. In the end, a diversity of communication channels will enhance adoption and commitment to the show.

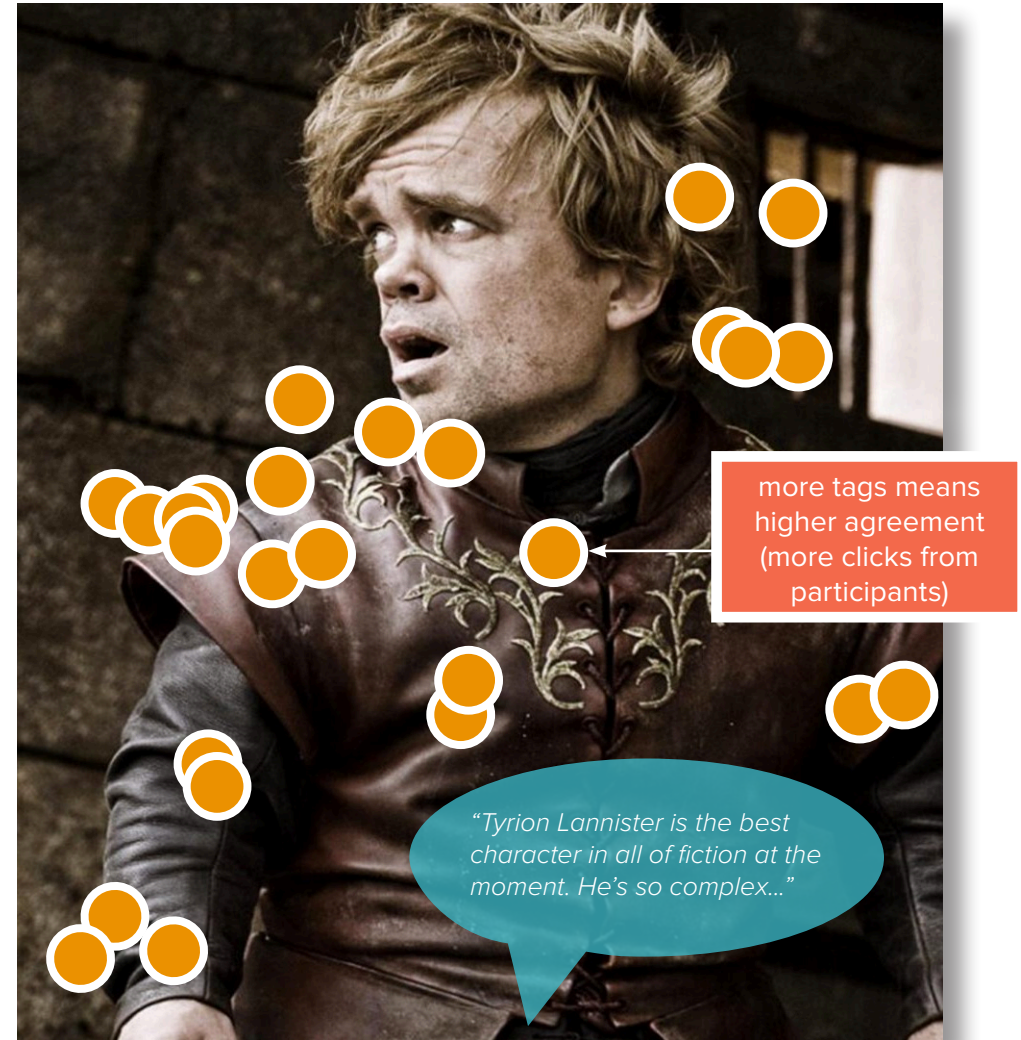
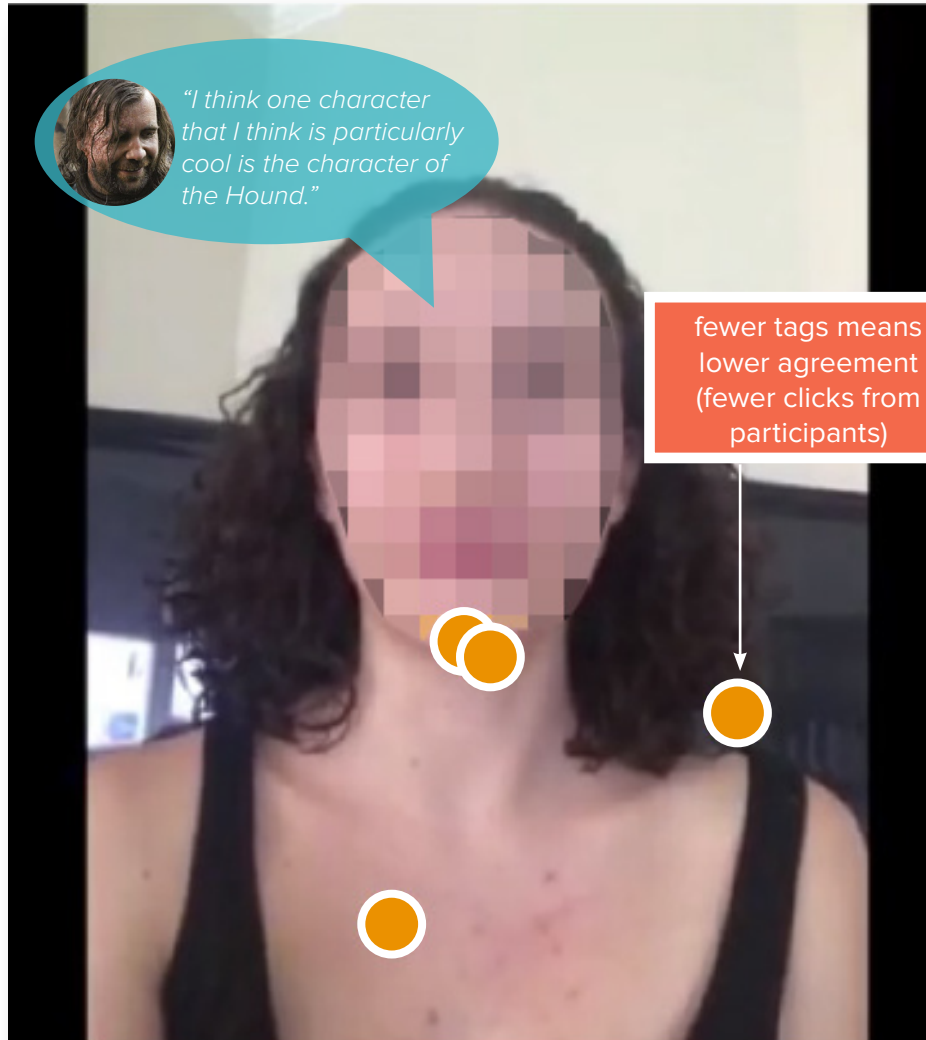
**BRANDS CAN STAY IN CHARACTER.** As casts of characters become more varied and plots get more complex, every brand should be able to find at least one thread that resonates with its identity without needing to resort to appeasement. Finding this point of resonance will yield a genuine connection with fans of the show who appreciate that same thread, and will help avoid the risks of pandering or compromise.





# LUMIÈRE ECHO: A NEW APPROACH TO ETHNOGRAPHY

**Echo** is an entirely new approach to ethnographic research, providing both the deep insights you'd expect from traditional ethnography and the scale more common to online methods. Using video materials as stimuli – paired with qualitative and quantitative feedback mechanisms built into the video screenings – Echo provides a platform for participants to share their own experiences, preferences, values, problems, and desires in real time as they watch.





# MY GAME OF THRONES: AN AUDIENCE SELF-PORTRAIT

## Latitude°

Latitude helps clients create inspiring content and technology through forward-looking, original research and visually rich insights.

We help companies better understand and engage their audiences across the following areas:

- Original content & programming strategy
- Digital & mobile product development and user experience design
- Advertising, branding & sponsorship opportunities and strategy
- Innovation at the intersection of media and technology

To learn more about working with Latitude, contact:  
Steve Mushkin / CEO/Founder / [smushkin@latd.com](mailto:smushkin@latd.com)

For press inquiries, contact:  
Kadley Gosselin / Content/Communications Manager / [kgosselin@latd.com](mailto:kgosselin@latd.com)

### Curious? Keep in touch with us

Interested in keeping up with the other cool stuff we're working on? Get to know us better by subscribing to our newsletter: <http://latd.com/clients-us/#maillist>

Connect with us here:

**latd.com**  
**@latddotcom**  
**facebook.com/latituderesearch**

## Lumière

Lumière® is a cloud application designed to gather rich feedback on video content of all kinds through interactive screenings, and to analyze that feedback simply and powerfully through dynamic data visualizations.

### Study Team

Neil Basu, Senior Analyst & Study Lead

Andy Wiltshire, Senior Analyst & Lead Strategist

Kadley Gosselin, Content Manager & Lead Designer

Steve Mushkin, President & Editorial Oversight

### Lumière's Product Suite

We've built a suite of "off-the-shelf" offerings powered by Lumière. Each of our products harnesses the power of video, with the scale and efficiency of the Web, to provide quicker results and richer data. In addition to Echo, we also offer:

**Sequence** - our approach to evaluating long-form video content.

**Spotlight** - a multi-faceted approach to testing persuasive content.

**Panorama** - Web and application interface evaluation through video tours.