

THE FUTURE OF STORYTELLING°

PHASE 1 OF 2

THE FUTURE OF STORYTELLING: PHASE 1 is one installment of Latitude 42s, an ongoing series of innovation studies which Latitude, an international research consultancy, publishes in the spirit of knowledge-sharing and opportunity discovery for both established companies and emerging entrepreneurs.

Latitude°

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MEDIA+

A woman with short brown hair is shown in profile, looking towards a large digital screen. The screen displays a grid of 30 small images arranged in 5 rows and 6 columns. The images represent various aspects of life and business, including: a hand holding a pen over a bar chart, a woman resting her head on her arms, a man with sunglasses making an 'OK' gesture, a group of people smiling, a woman smiling with her hands clasped, a person in a field with arms raised, a woman holding a smartphone, a woman in a colorful hat, a person doing a handstand, a hand erasing a whiteboard, a lizard on a leaf, a woman working on a laptop, a person in a yoga pose, a woman meditating, a person holding a small plant, a person using a toothbrush, a woman smiling, a woman holding a child, a hand pressing a green button, a close-up of a ruler, a green arrow pointing up, a person holding a small plant, a person in a suit walking, a person sitting on a couch, and a close-up of a person's face.

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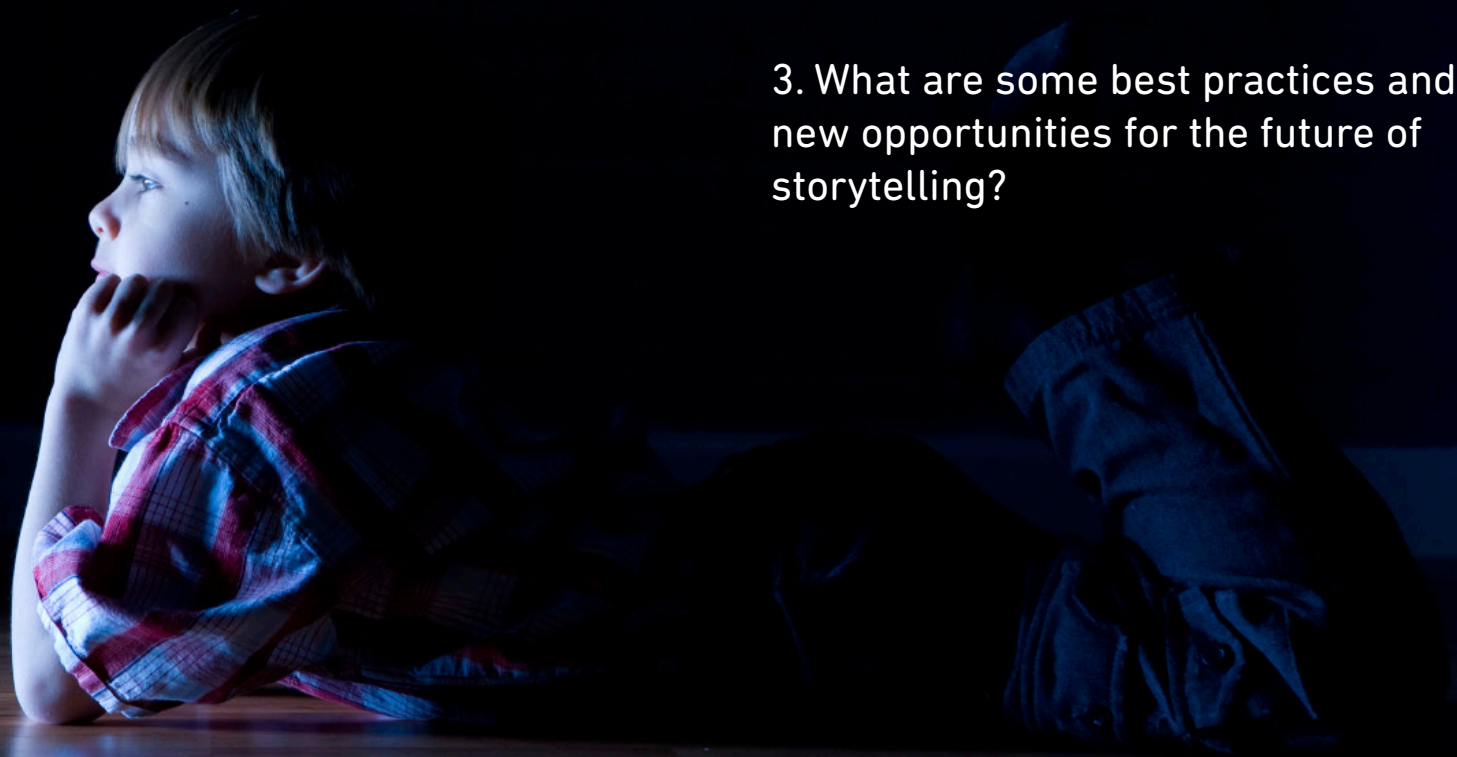
OUR QUESTIONS

The future storytelling concepts imagined by our participants highlight audiences' growing appetite for experiences that not only allow them to delve deeper **into** stories, but that also bring stories **out of** the screen—both literally and figuratively—to mingle with our actual lives. Through an analysis of the themes present in our participants' concepts, we created the *4 I's of Storytelling* framework on the following pages to illustrate key dimensions of good storytelling experiences.

1. How are audiences' expectations around storytelling evolving as media experiences become more multi-platform, more customizable, and more participatory?

2. How can content creators and technologists make stories come alive, by allowing audiences to delve deeper into them or by bringing them out into the real world?

3. What are some best practices and new opportunities for the future of storytelling?



THE 4 I'S OF STORYTELLING: *OUT*

IMMERSION

Can I go deeper into the story-world, by learning more about it or by heightening my sensory experience of it?



“I wish there was an app that would give me information about the historical time period that the work took place during. **What else was going on in the world when Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy were falling in love? Who was the king or queen of England? What would the characters typically eat for breakfast? What type of music did they listen to? Immerse me in their world.**”

—Female, 29, Berkeley, CA, USA

INTERACTIVITY

Can I change or influence elements of the story?
Can I interact with other people around the story?



“I want to friend Bond and his other MI5 pals on Facebook. I want to get updates, images and videos from 007 as he tracks down the terrorist, saves the world and gets the girl. **The story would play out in real-time**, so I could check in on him while I’m waiting in line at the bank, and offer him some advice just before he rushes into a raid on the kingpin’s hideout. But—and this is key—I **don’t want to be a voyeur; I want to be a participant. I want to really friend Bond, and have him call me by name and listen to my advice. I want to change the story based on how I interact with Bond and what’s going on in my life.**”

—Male, 37, Santa Clara, CA, USA

OF THE SCREEN, INTO MY WORLD

INTEGRATION

Is a cohesive story being told across platforms?
Can it interface with the real world in any way?



“I’d love to be a part of a real-world game, whereby, citywide, everyone is reading the same book. We are told a date by when we should have read to a certain point in the book; for example, we’d be told to read to the first ball held at the Wilkes’ plantation. Players would have received a formal invitation to the ball along with costume suggestions. **Then the players would get to engage with that real-world party as the action from the actual story plays out.** Not only would the players buy the book—they would pay for each experience with which they’d like to participate.”

—Female, 39, Brooklyn, NY, USA

IMPACT

Does the story inspire me to take action in my own life, such as making a purchase or supporting a good cause?



“While reading Cinderella, I’d like if actions and recipes for the perfect scrubbing of floors or green window-washing could be accessed. Prince Charming could lead you to a dating service. The mice and birds would actually provide you with a pattern for sewing Cinderella’s dress. When the cat and dog are fighting, there could be pop-ins from the current adoptees at the local SPCA. The wedding would provide listings for local caterers, musicians, and event halls. After selecting a few preferences, your perfect glass slipper (read: high end shoe), and three runners-up would be provided.”

—Female, 36, Penticton, Canada

An illustration of Alexander Graham Bell, an elderly man with a long white beard and hair, wearing a brown suit and a gold chain. He is holding a black smartphone in his right hand, with a white cord trailing down. In the background, a sign reads "BELL TELEPHONE".

BELL TELEPHONE

INSIGHT^o

THE REAL WORLD IS A PLATFORM, TOO

Transmedia is More than Media-Shifting

Audiences now expect to shift seamlessly from one device to another—to pause a Netflix film on TV and resume watching later on a tablet. That said, content creators should seek to *deepen*, not just duplicate, experiences across platforms by leveraging each environment's strengths (think: interactivity on tablets). The desire for differentiation is no longer niche, and soon it will become an expectation. Eighty-two percent of participants wanted more mobile apps that would complement, not just replicate, their TV viewing experiences, while fewer (68%) felt there should be more apps to help them access content they already watch elsewhere.

Out of the Screen, into My World

Because we now have portable, sensor-laden mobile devices that go everywhere with us, audiences feel that content in those devices should get smarter, too: by becoming relevant to where we are and what we're doing in the physical world (75%). When asked to develop a new way of interacting with stories, 52% of participants treated the real world as another "platform," incorporating networked real-world objects, augmented reality, 3D projected environments, and other technologies that bridge the divide between digital and physical. Younger participants (24 and under) were significantly more likely than their older counterparts (35+) to desire content integration with the real world, ranging from location-aware games to discovering new products.

"It would be really cool to experience the world through 'other people's eyes.' If I'm reading a biography of an influential person, I'd like to be able to use augmented reality or location-aware mobile apps to get a sense of how that person would look at things around me that I encounter and interact with. For example, I look at a phone and see a phone; Alexander Graham Bell would be amazed at how far we've come since the first voice-over-wire transmissions and would see that device in his mind's eye." —Male, 38, Newton, MA, USA

INSIGHT°

WAIT, WHO'S THE AUTHOR?



Audiences Crave More Control

As the Web becomes more interactive and real-time, audiences want increased control over their individual content experiences; 79% envisioned interactions that would allow them to alter a storyline—by influencing or becoming a character themselves (56%) or by manipulating plot events directly (37%).

Collaboration Extends Beyond the Story

Taking narrative control to the next level, audiences are willing to build and support a story that recognizes their ideas. Donating creativity (over money or professional skills) holds the widest appeal, with 93% of participants expressing interest in submitting possible story ideas to producers. Still, two-thirds are willing to help fund stories they're interested in (e.g., on a platform like Kickstarter), and 79% would leverage their social networks or create promotional materials to help get the word out.



“I would like to interact with the story as if I were an ordinary person to whom the story is occurring. I would like to be able to experience the story as if I were a citizen of one of the grand cities which are involved in the story, such as a guardsman of the city of Minas Tirith or the escort of the elves in their journey to the Grey Havens. A constantly-evolving world would envelop the player, allowing him to choose his own path, but not emphasizing how the player is a ‘hero’ or ‘chosen one,’ which, I feel, would increase the sense of immersion for the player experiencing the game.” —Male, 21, Easton, PA, USA

BEST PRACTICES^o

THE PERFECT STORY WOULD...

MEET BASIC INFORMATION NEEDS. Audiences desire instant access to information that deepens their experiences of a narrative, such as added historical or cultural context for a story’s setting (e.g., “how did people actually live back then?”).

OFFER A NEW VANTAGE POINT. Allow audiences to explore different perspectives—by seeing things from a certain character’s point-of-view or by becoming a character themselves who is *not* a main character. Because works of historical fiction tend to have richer, more “novel” story-worlds, they’re ripe for these types of off-the-beaten-path interactions.

OFFER A SOMEWHAT ACTIVE EXPERIENCE. Only 12% prefer completely passive media experiences, while more than half crave “a lot” of interactivity when it comes to making plot decisions, interacting with or influencing characters, and so on.

CONVERSE WITH THE REAL WORLD. Audiences want their actions in the physical world to impact the larger narrative. For example: contribute to battle efforts against another side by having your smartphone register when you’re near a particular location or another participating fan, or by importing an object into the story-world by scanning a real version of it with your phone. Not surprisingly, real world integration is popular for sci-fi, fantasy, and other epic stories.

BE LONG-RUNNING. Forget flings; today’s audiences want to commit to long-term media relationships. Thirty-eight percent thought the perfect story would be 4+ installments, while 31% felt never-ending would be just the right length.

OPPORTUNITIES°

“For a long time, the transmedia space has seemed to be really big on comic book characters and science fiction and spies and conspiracies and cults. I think we could just as easily have a blockbuster romance transmedia narrative, and **it hasn’t happened because the people creating these projects are the early adopter geek community; it’s less because audiences today wouldn’t do it.**”

—Andrea Phillips, Author of *A Creator’s Guide to Transmedia Storytelling*

FOR WRITERS: BRING CHARACTERS OUT OF THE SCREEN TO DEEPEN LOYALTY

New forms of storytelling aren’t *just* about inundating audiences with hoards of great information about the characters or the setting; that is, they’re not just about delving deeper into a story-world. They’re also about bringing the story out of the screen, into the audience’s actual world. Stories should capitalize on how an audience member relates to characters or situations, and how that carries over into his or her own life—and across platforms, keeping in mind that characters can be created with multi-platform or transmedia experiences in mind. Characters can motivate a person to learn, to live healthier, to form and foster relationships, to support a worthy cause, and so on—an effect which may be magnified by certain characters more than others.

FOR NON-FICTION PRODUCERS & BRANDS: TRANSMEDIA IS MORE THAN FANTASY

The common assumption that “transmedia is just for sci-fi” still prevails, leaving a major opportunity unexplored for the non-fiction space, including news reality media, and advertising. Audiences crave immersive experiences with news content, and material like this—with a variety of perspectives and authors, formats, “layers,” and so on—is ripe for expansion into a larger news “story-world.” Successful branded entertainment creators will be asking the next question: “How can we leverage multiple platforms, including the physical world, to tell a holistic, compelling narrative?” Retailers, for instance, would do well not to overlook physical assets (e.g., stores, kiosks, etc.) as another viable platform to tell a 360° brand story.

FOR INTERACTION DESIGNERS: OFFER MULTIPLE MODES OF INTERACTIVITY

People want to put varying levels of effort into their content experiences—not surprisingly, how active or passive one wishes to be varies from person-to-person, and across different genres and situational contexts. Content creators can overcome the “how do we make transmedia mainstream-accessible?” challenge by allowing audiences to choose their desired tier of interactivity at the outset, optimizing engagement for a group of individuals with different and changing need states. Creators of transmedia experiences, like author and game designer Andrea Phillips, have established that creating the “illusion of interactivity” for even the most involved audience members isn’t necessarily difficult—so why not create customized tiers of engagement to attract a broader fan base?

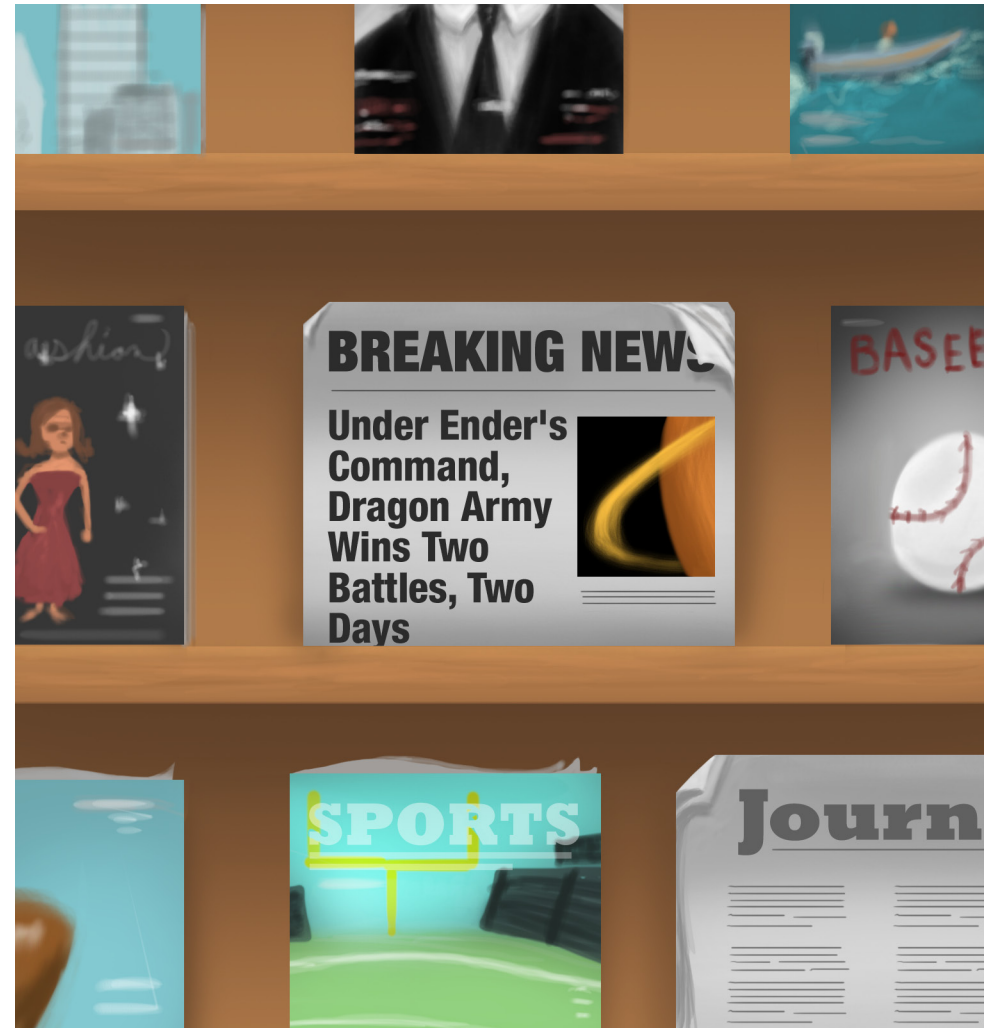
CHARACTERS IN CONTEXTS



“I want to be able to hear, read, touch, and feel the story in different languages and cultural contexts. **How would my character look, talk, and behave in this situation if she was Indian vs. Mexican? Rich vs. poor?**

What if it was 1800 and the woman decided to leave her husband just because she was unhappy? **I'd want to swap characters in and out of situations to see how the story unfolds and how he or she reacts.** This kind of cross-cultural adventure could also teach language (e.g., click on an object or sentence for a translation) or offer more information about different cultural artifacts (e.g., click on a food and have the recipe sent to your smartphone).” —Female, 33, Santa Ana, Costa Rica

ONGOING STORY-WORLDS



“It would be amazing if my e-reader kept track of days I read and days I didn't. For example, if I had just read a part of *Ender's Game* where Ender was about to engage in a big battle, and then I stopped for a few days, it would send me a 'news' email telling me about the victory—or about the loss. In the same vein, **I could see 'news updates' about big events in the story unfolding as they would if there was actual, real-time press coverage.** They might tell me what happened to a minor character after he lost a big battle that he was projected to win, from an ESPN-type 'source.'”

—Male, 20, Milton, MA, USA

An aerial view of New York City, featuring the Empire State Building prominently in the center. The city is densely packed with skyscrapers and buildings. Several film strips are floating in the air, some showing blurred images, suggesting motion and storytelling. The overall tone is warm and cinematic.

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PHASE 2 OF 2

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Latitude°

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MEDIA & CONTENT

HIGHLIGHTS°

For Content Creators

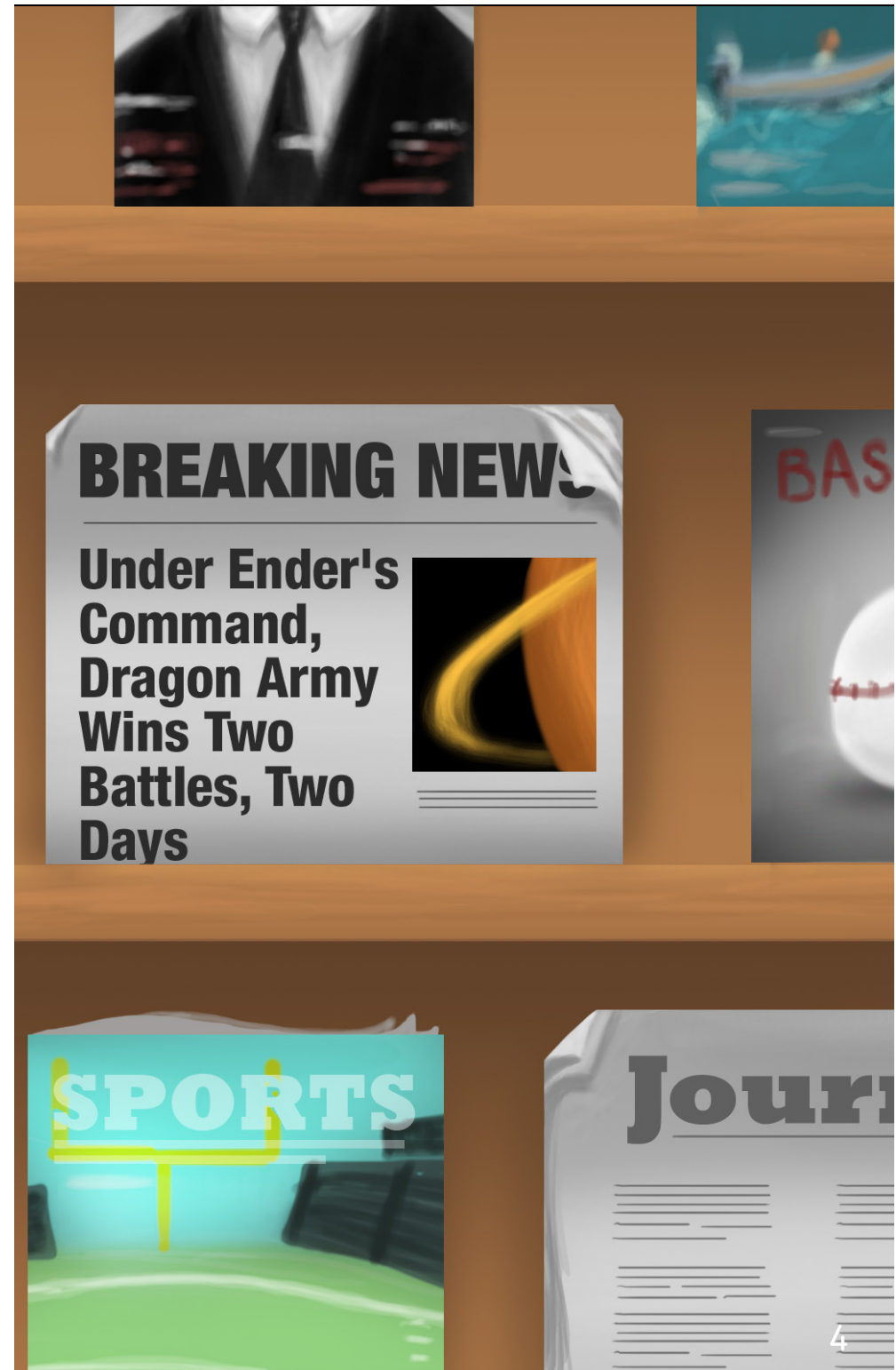
- **Level up on the character-audience relationship**
Audiences want to get deeper inside the minds of characters; they want to see things from their perspectives and, in some cases, develop personal relationships with them. Would chatting with a character on Facebook really be so different from chatting with a real friend there?
- **Push the limits of how, when, and where stories are told**
As characters become more “3-D,” why shouldn’t they live full, 24/7 lives? People are intrigued by the idea of real-time story-worlds where events keep unfolding whether or not we happen to be tuning in.

For Brands and Marketers

- **Embrace new narrative techniques, once and for all**
Audiences agree that there’s a big opportunity to make ads feel more like content people would naturally choose to engage with—by providing back-story about a brand or product, visually immersive experiences, game elements, and so on. (See p. 8 for details.)
- **Think of the real world as another platform**
These days, many of us carry around smartphones that not only work synchronously with other devices, but are capable of interfacing with real objects and places. Maybe the definition of “cross-platform” needs a makeover? (Retailers, this especially means you.)

For All Storytellers

- **Heed the second (and third) screens: here’s how**
When it comes to secondary devices, some might think it’s all been done before. (We beg to differ.) Top opportunities include interacting with characters, earning rewards, accessing bonus content, and more. (See p. 9 for the full list.)
- **Recognize many audiences and many ways to engage**
While it’s easy to generalize about “what audiences want,” people desire vastly different things from stories—such as very passive vs. highly interactive experiences. (See p. 11 for more on audience types.)



WHO IS THE NEW AUDIENCE?

WHAT DO THEY WANT?

Based on a segmentation analysis of people's motivations for engaging with stories and their interest in various second screen experiences, we uncovered four audience archetypes: Seekers, Relaters, Realists, and Players. The graphic below maps the archetypes to Latitude's *4 I's of Storytelling*. (Darker shades of red indicate greater interest in each "I.") To explore audience data interactively or to discover your own archetype, visit futureofstorytellingproject.com.

IMPACT

The story affects my actual life, by inspiring me to discover more, make a purchase, better myself, or take action in some way.

INTEGRATION

The story plays out across platforms, or can interface with the real world.

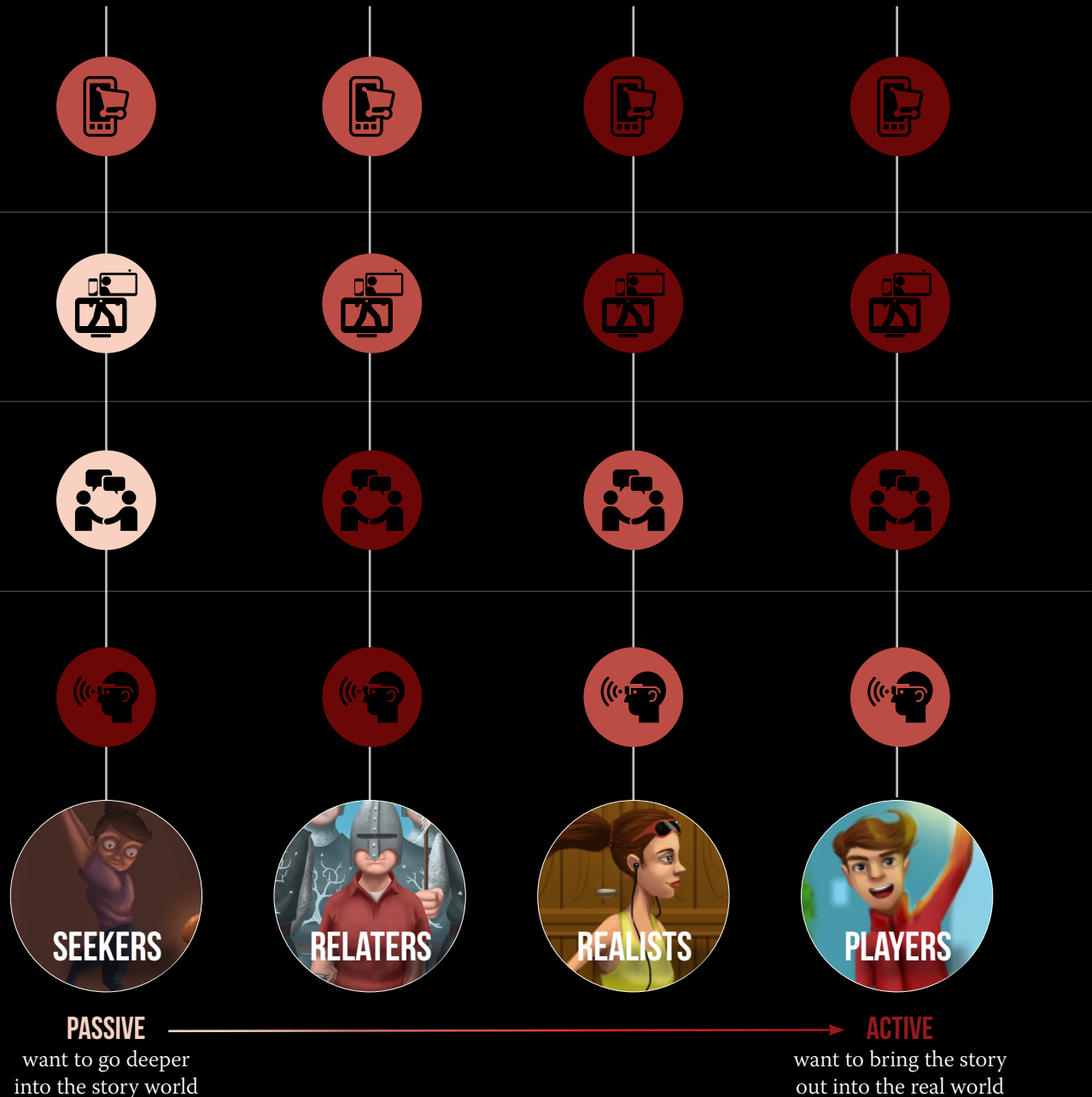
INTERACTIVITY

I can interact with characters, the storyline, or other fans.

IMMERSION

I can go "deeper into" the story, by learning more about it or through heightened sensory experiences.

The *4 I's of Storytelling* (above) is a framework Latitude created by analyzing themes present in the future storytelling concepts generated by Phase 1 participants. It represents not only a desire to delve deeper into stories, but also to bring stories out of the screen—both literally and figuratively—to mingle with our actual lives.



SEEKERS



This group is all about going deeper into the story, exploring different worlds, and learning new things—making them voracious information seekers. They want more back-story, more bonus content, more sneak peeks—more, more, more. And they want it without distraction; Seekers are least likely to use a second screen (for any reason — including looking up related content, emailing, shopping, texting, etc.) simultaneously while engaging with a story, but they do express interest in checking out related content at other times.

Profile

- **Gender:** skews female
- **Age:** more 35-59 year-olds
- **Genres:** drama, mystery & crime
- **Second screens:** computer, tablet
- **Values:** escape via mention stimulation, focus, depth of experience
- **I's:** immersion

Top Future Requests

- Look up back-story about the characters, setting, or plot
- Explore or interact with the story's setting (e.g., explore a room or landscape, examine objects, etc.)
- Access more “sneak peeks” from episodes or sequels

What Brands Should Know

- Generally value learning and opportunities to go “deeper into” content
- More likely than other archetypes to pay attention to ads
- Appreciate humor and creativity in ads, as well ads featuring deals
- Rely strongly on friend recommendations & quality of a brand's reputation
- Often recommend products & services to friends, but place much less emphasis on social media relative to more traditional word-of-mouth methods
- Typically discover new content via TV commercials/promos & friends

RELATERS



An intensely extroverted coterie when it comes to content, Relaters want to discuss and share their favorite narratives with friends and family, in-person and online. Naturally, social media plays a key role for this group both in discovering and staying committed to content. Relaters aren't just looking to bond with other people, though; they enjoy forming deep, emotional connections with

characters, especially when these connections uplift or inspire them.

Profile

- **Gender:** roughly equal split between men & women
- **Age:** typically under 35, including many teenagers
- **Genres:** comedy, drama, reality
- **Second screen:** smartphone
- **Values:** sharing, optimism, relating
- **I's:** interactivity (with others & the story), impact

Top Future Requests

- Interact with characters in a way that's not pre-scripted
- See things from a particular character's perspective, or switch between different characters' perspectives
- See, hear, or touch the story-world (e.g., have an immersive sensory experience via virtual reality, 3D effects, etc.)

What Brands Should Know

- Generally value engaging with characters and socializing (especially via social media)
- Prefer relatable brands; they feel that what they buy plays a role in defining who they are
- Enjoy humorous ads, as well as game-like and visually immersive ones
- Rely strongly on friend recommendations via social media and frequently recommend to others this way
- Typically discover new content via TV commercials/promos & friends

REALISTS



The idea of integrating narratives into the real, physical world intrigues this down-to-earth crowd, especially if it leads to tangible or meaningful outcomes such as making a purchase, learning something new, or influencing how a story ends (e.g., by voting). Realists want stories that lead to personal growth, productivity, and all-around better living. With feet firmly planted in the real world,

they are more likely than other archetypes to gravitate towards non-fiction narratives.

Profile

- **Gender:** roughly equal split between men & women
- **Age:** more 35-59 year-olds
- **Genres:** documentaries, news, travel, advertising
- **Second screen:** computer
- **Values:** practicality, real-world relevance, self-improvement
- **I's:** interactivity (with the story), integration, impact

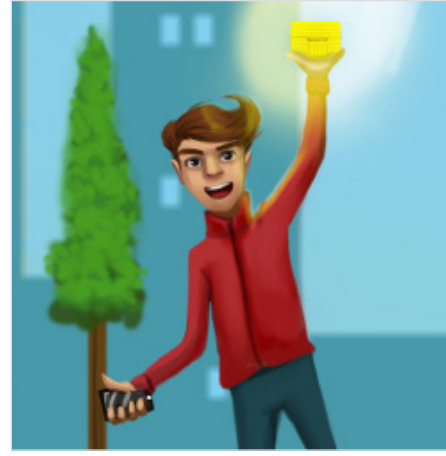
Top Future Requests

- Bring narratives out of the screen, into the real world, by involving actual places, people, or objects
- Discover new products or services through stories
- Learn more about the way characters live (or lived) & any larger historical or societal happenings surrounding the story

What Brands Should Know

- Generally goal-oriented (e.g., enjoy voting & contests, self-betterment, etc.)
- Feel TV is the anchor for social interactions & experiences on other devices; desire differentiated experiences across platforms
- Actively recommend brands via social media & other word-of-mouth
- Open to innovative advertising; many approaches work well
- Prefer ads that invite interest & don't try to persuade (e.g., branded content)
- Typically discover new content via official TV network sites & online ads

PLAYERS



These super-engagers are into just about everything—from following their favorite characters' Twitter accounts to becoming characters themselves. They crave interactivity, gravitating towards narratives with game elements and a spirit of adventure or competition. But why stop there? Players also want to take part in creating stories, such as by submitting ideas to writers or producers

or authoring their own narratives. They're avid multi-screener and mobile devotees (particularly attached to their smartphones and most likely to own tablets)—which may explain why they're extra enthusiastic about possibilities for integrating stories with the real, physical world.

Profile

- **Gender:** skews slightly male
- **Age:** more 18-34 year-olds
- **Genres:** diverse tastes including sports, comedy, horror, advertising
- **Second screens:** smartphone & tablet
- **Values:** enjoyment, agency, collaboration & competition, personal success
- **I's:** immersion, interactivity (with others & the story), integration, impact

Top Future Requests

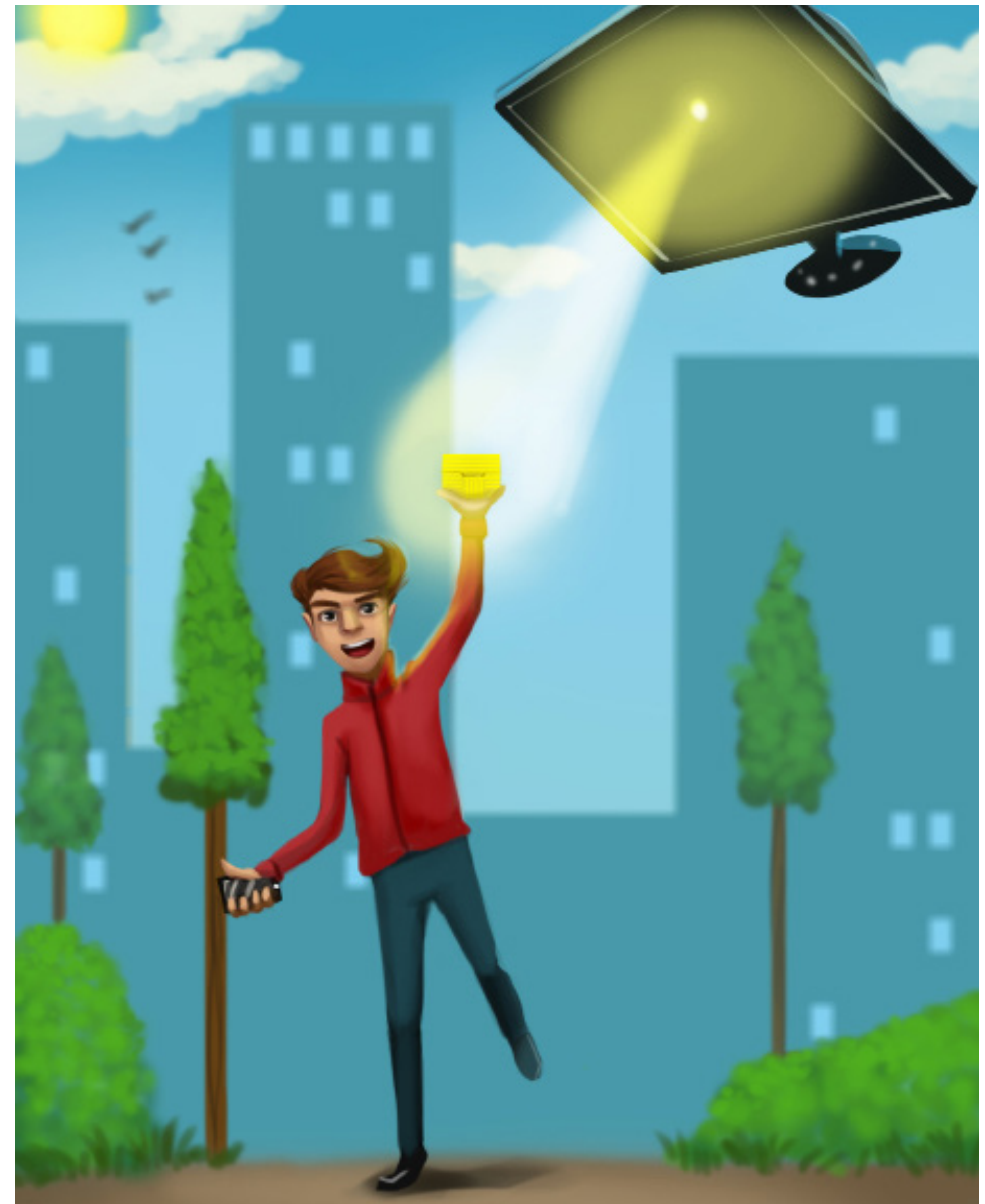
- Compete with other fans in a game scenario, or collaborate with them to actually write or produce a story
- Become a character
- Have real-world actions affect events within a story

What Brands Should Know

- Desirable audience (e.g., tech-y, highly social, etc.) but can be hard to engage
- Least "TV-centric" archetype; high level of comfort with other devices
- Value brands with a high "cool factor"; interested in real world integrations
- Prefer non-traditional ads (e.g., branded content, ability to help shape the story, contests, game elements, immersive visuals, social media tie-ins, etc.)
- Typically discover new content via social media & online forums



“I want technology to help me make sense of complex stories by providing family trees, characters maps, and biographies. My dream is that, when I encounter a character I don’t remember well, I won’t have to flip back hundreds of pages scanning for where they’ve appeared previously. Instead, I **click on his or her name, and get a summary of everything I should know at this stage of the story, with no risk of spoilers.**” —Male, 28, London, UK



“It would be really interesting if a TV show pitting two warring groups against one another could have battles and, ultimately, **the outcome of the galaxy could be influenced by viewers**—be it through games, real-life ‘quests,’ knowledge-based contests, and so on. I think sci-fi is a good fit for this because reality is very arbitrary there, and the rules can bend to accommodate interesting and compelling cross-media integrations.” —Male, 28, Cambridge, MA, USA