



*"We're the Moneyball of  
testing for content producers."*  
– Invoke CEO Gigi Wang

# 5 Benefits of Virtual Screening Research

**T**est-screening movies, TV series, and other filmed content has never been more efficient, more effective, and more secure. This is made possible by a disruptive, real-time, cloud-based audience measurement model developed by Invoke, a research technology firm that began focusing on the entertainment industry three years ago.

The exponential increase in marketplace competition due to a greater number of productions across more distribution outlets, coupled with the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the entertainment industry's traditional marketing strategies accelerated the need for a new and innovative way to find out how audiences react to new films and shows. This need is further intensified by the rise of digital platforms, both VOD and streaming, which have led to a surge in home and mobile viewing.

Invoke's test screenings are held online rather than in person, on a proprietary, cloud-based platform, in a secure environment so sensitive that there's an instant lockout at the mere detection of a cell phone or other recording device. Immediately following the screening the Invoke moderator leads the participants in a live, interactive discussion following a guide developed in advance by Invoke and the client.

Using Invoke's technology platform, participant responses – both quantitative and qualitative – are delivered in real-time, giving clients actionable results immediately, not a day or two later. There is no limit to the number of participants; the typical session consists of a few hundred people.

In addition to choosing audience sample size, clients also can

choose geographic location, language, and other desired demographics, allowing them to reach a customized audience across the country and even around the world.

Invoke believes that as content consumption moves from the theater to a digital platform, testing must make a similar transition. The pandemic only hastened this migration.

Invoke tests content with viewers in their own space, putting them in a familiar environment where they normally watch movies and shows. Invoke has been doing virtual test-screenings for over a decade and has spoken to tens of thousands of consumers. Over the last three years, the company has tested hundreds of episodes, pilots, movies, games, trailers, and ads.





**"We're the *Moneyball* of testing for content producers," says Invoke CEO Gigi Wang. "The first thing we drive at is the why. Blending dial scores, qualitative discussions, and quantitative surveys, you get at whether or not they like what they're watching – and even more importantly, you understand why they do or don't like it."**

Unlocking this "why" provides needed insights for showrunners,

directors, producers, studios, networks, distributors, and marketers to optimize what they're bringing to their audiences' screens. This has never been more important than it is today. The traditional theatrical window has been shattered and movies are becoming available simultaneously on PVOD. Meanwhile, billions of dollars are being spent on new content production to win the highly competitive streaming wars. Uncovering key drivers behind consumers' responses to movies, TV shows, and other filmed content

can help spur the changes necessary to guarantee that these stories will strike the right chord with target audiences.

Read on to explore the ways Invoke's cloud-based test-screenings stand out from traditional research methods by providing clients with the five critical S's – space, speed, scale, selectivity, and security – needed to elevate their storytelling and refine their marketing tools to promote this content.

## Accelerated Migration from Theater Screens to Digital Screens

**H**ollywood for years has relied on traditional focus groups to test-screen movies, TV shows, and trailers. Focus groups historically have helped studios, producers, directors, and others involved in the production and marketing of filmed content mitigate risk by optimizing the content and making sure it resonates with its intended audience.

Traditional focus groups, according to *The New York Times*, consist of a live audience "whose demographics match those of the film's hoped-for audience. After seeing the movie, the hand-picked audience usually fills out cards answering questions about how they liked the film, and a small number may stay for a focus-group discussion. A movie will be tested once, twice, even more times, usually in the Los Angeles area, because that's where most of the movie executives are. And movies change as a result."

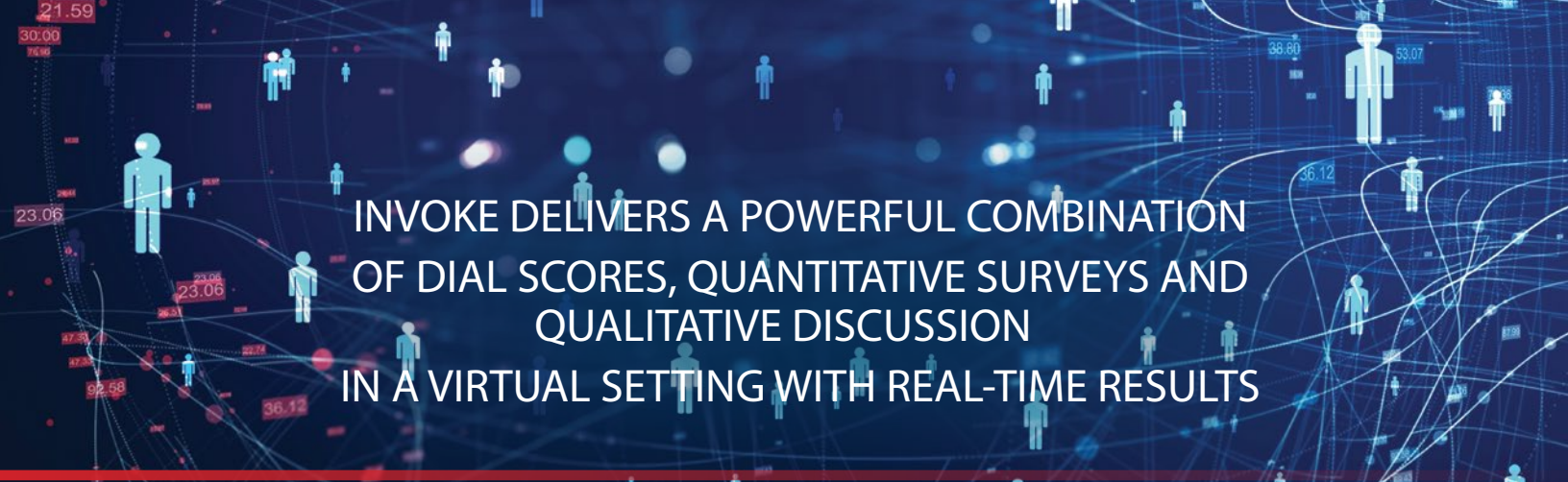
**Invoke takes the focus group concept and moves it into the virtual world, using its proprietary and patented cloud-based technology. This technology enables simultaneous live interactions with hundreds of consumers, aggregates the feedback, and presents the results in real-time as the conversation and inquiry progresses.**

Researchers use Invoke's technology platform to conduct live, hour-long sessions to talk to hundreds of people across the country simultaneously to get a deep understanding of what they like or dislike in a movie and, more importantly, why they like or dislike a movie, a show, a trailer, a game, a social media posting, or key art

for marketing materials.

Beyond the real-time screenings, Invoke offers detailed reports and analysis that can be furnished to clients after the screening. Survey questions are developed by Invoke's team with input from the client. Wang notes that Invoke maintains a questionnaire library for some studios and networks for comedies and dramas, scripted and unscripted content, "that are standard — so we can test quickly and provide the responses we get against the company norm for that particular genre."

Questions can be numerical or unstructured and open-ended. "The open-ended responses we get are very, very rich, and if there are any questions to which we do not get enough richness or depth, we can prompt them, 'Can you elaborate on that,' and people really will," Wang says.



# INVOKE DELIVERS A POWERFUL COMBINATION OF DIAL SCORES, QUANTITATIVE SURVEYS AND QUALITATIVE DISCUSSION IN A VIRTUAL SETTING WITH REAL-TIME RESULTS

Invoke's virtual screening research delivers five strategic benefits to address and maximize the client's marketing goals: **SPACE, SPEED, SCALE, SELECTIVITY, and SECURITY.**

## 1 SPACE

Invoke moves the research process from a specific place to ANY PLACE.

Gathering the right participants, and the right *number* of participants, for an in-person study has long been an obstacle for researchers and their clients.

Location and scheduling restrictions can make it difficult for researchers to reach quotas. Invoke's platform makes it possible to bring together members of a target audience to test their responses with greater ease and in larger numbers than previously imaginable – and the content is viewed in a more comfortable, familiar environment where they

already consume most of their entertainment ... their own homes.

"Our methodology brings the content to the consumer in a real-world environment. Participants in our test-screenings are at home, on their laptops, wherever they typically watch movies or binge-watch series," Wang says. "That's a compelling advantage."

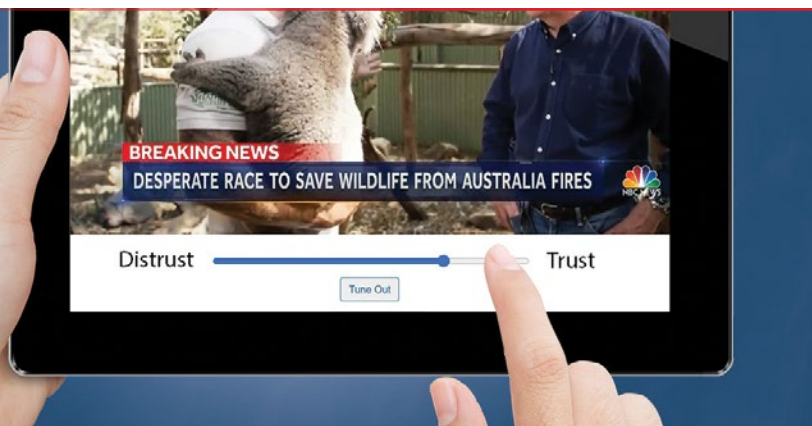
## 2 SPEED

Invoke clients get immediate results. During the actual screening, clients are able to monitor responses in real-time. Using the tablet or computer that they regularly use

to consume content, viewers control a digital slider found at the bottom of the screen to measure their feelings about a particular scene or image. Then, completing post-screening questions, they are able to quantify how much they like or dislike content,

judge whether a scene is funny or not, indicate whether it works to further the plot or is more of a distraction, and respond to any questions posed by the client.

This element, Wang says, is essential for pinpointing moments in the storyline that work — or don't. "We're in a virtual room with clients, usually a showrunner and marketing and consumer insights people, and most often they want to know how much, and why, viewers like what they're watching," Wang said. "We also use this function a lot when there are two different endings."

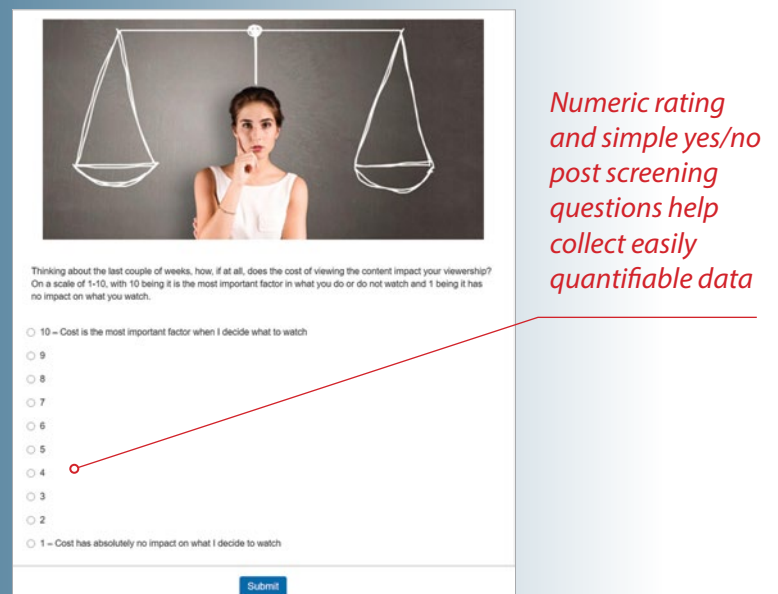
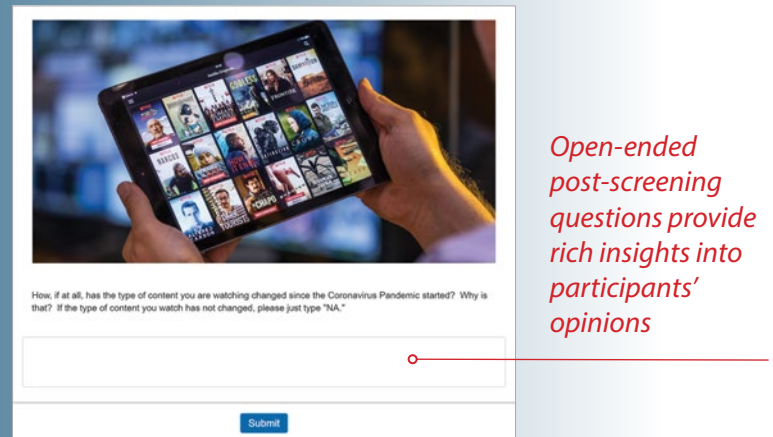
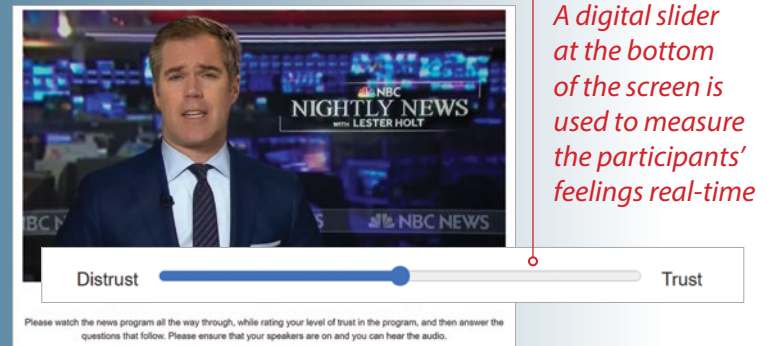


"Comments are seen as they are typed and are also analyzed in real-time, with trending keywords appearing on the dashboard," adds Tole Khesin, Invoke's head of marketing. "We're all there, watching the dashboard, just like election results."

After the screening, viewers are typically asked 30-60 minutes' worth of questions, from as few as 30 to as many as 90, depending on the complexity of the question. Some are simple "yes," "no," or multiple choice-type questions, while others are open-ended. Let's say that in a pivotal moment in the film, two characters high-five each other. Viewers are asked, first of all, if they saw it and then asked what it meant to them. "They might say, 'I got it — at that moment I realized those two were allies and not enemies,'" Wang says. "But if they answer, 'Yeah, I saw it — so what,' it tells us the scene didn't get the point across."

By receiving immediate responses to moments or points of interest in their content from their target audience in real-time, clients can glean key insights immediately. This allows them to act fast to make decisions incorporating the valuable feedback they've received.

## Real-Time and Post Screening Feedback







We can sample nationwide, or even globally, and we talk to participants simultaneously in real-time

**3 SCALE**  
Another advantage that Invoke's test-screening model has over traditional research is scale. Invoke can reach hundreds of viewers at a time, not just a handful of people who are intercepted in a mall or who

answer ads to do research and then show up at a scheduled time in a screening room.

Respondents can be drawn from all geographic regions, not just one physical location, at a time, ranging from a single country to multiple countries, with instantaneous translations available

in more than 50 languages. "We can sample nationwide, or even globally — we typically include 100 to 300 people in each test — and we talk to them simultaneously in real-time," Wang says. "That's our secret sauce."

*Instantaneous translations  
in more than 50 languages*



Global Data

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# 4 SELECTIVITY

Invoke's virtual, multi-faceted approach not only provides a bigger sample than traditional, in-person focus groups, but also offers a better sample in terms of demographic makeup, viewing environment, and geographic reach.

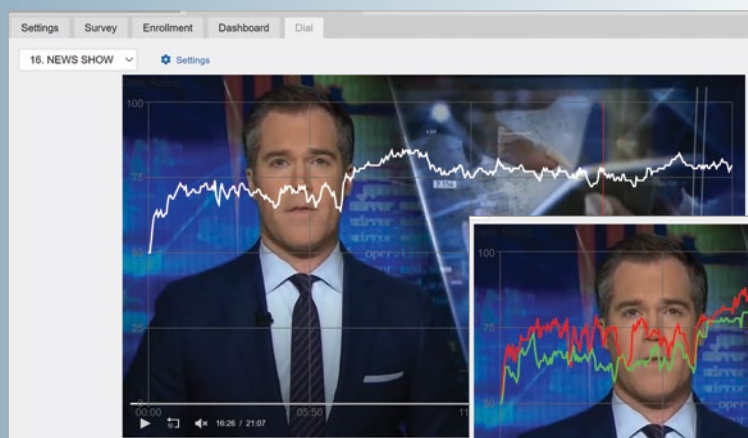
The audience demographic can be tailored to client specifications. Often, clients ask Invoke to pick people of a certain age range,

gender, or ethnic group. Other times, clients have a more specific audience in mind: for example, people who have watched a certain film franchise or TV series and thus are familiar with it; people who have read a certain book; people who are fans of a certain director, actor, or genre.

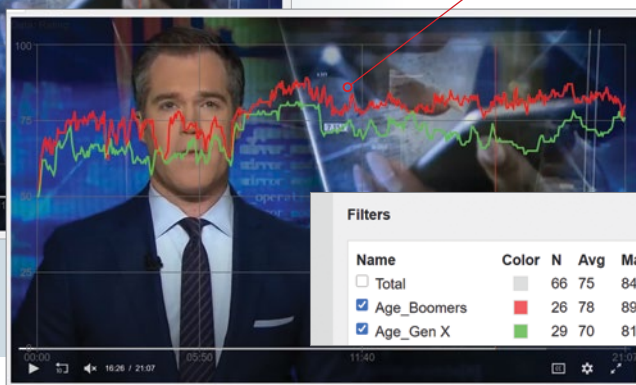
Invoke then does the rest.

"We work with every panel company in the country, so we can purchase that sample from anyone," Wang said.

In some cases, she adds, the client will provide its own audience. "You can imagine these large companies — streamers, gaming, social media," Wang said. "All of them know who their subscribers are, and sometimes they want us to use a subset, so they feed that subset into our platform to use alone or in conjunction with additional lists.



**Comprehensive vs. Filtered Data**



○ = Total Data

*Collected data can be broken down into specific datasets and displayed in real-time using Invoke's filter features*

● = Dataset by Age: Baby Boomers  
● = Dataset by Age: GenX

# 5 SECURITY

One of the hallmarks of Invoke's innovative cloud-based technology is security. Invoke provides individual watermarking on video and static assets using each respondent's unique ID or nickname. The company also allows clients to select where on the screen the watermark should be placed.

On the user end, Invoke's technology prohibits downloading, copying, and extraction. On top of that, Invoke's technology detects mobile devices, with an immediate lockout to prohibit recording. Invoke's security is certified by the Trusted Partner Network (TPN), a joint venture between two major entertainment industry associations, the Motion Picture Association (MPA) and the Content Delivery & Security Association

(CDSA), the worldwide leaders in third-party entertainment industry assessments.

The TPN is a global, industry-wide film and television content protection initiative. The TPN helps companies prevent leaks, breaches, and hacks of their customers' movies and television shows prior to their intended release. Invoke's security also is certified by several large movie studios and streaming platforms.

## Invoke Delivers a Powerhouse Combination

Invoke only expanded into the entertainment industry in 2017, yet the company already has amassed an impressive track record, with some of the biggest Hollywood studios and top subscription-streaming services using its platform.

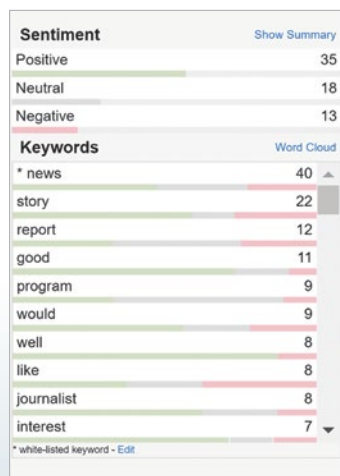
Sheri Conn, an Invoke client-turned-company-advisor and global marketing executive who has held leadership roles at DreamWorks, Paramount, and Disney, was intrigued by the cloud-based platform and proprietary methodology from the moment she first heard about it. "It almost

sounded too good to be true," she says. "I was immediately drawn to a marketer's ability to combine dial scores, quantitative surveys, and focus group-type discussion to get a more complete assessment. The number of respondents you could test with at one time was a real game-changer – but I was afraid I might lose some of the real-time insights given how many comments you were suddenly seeing on screen at one time.

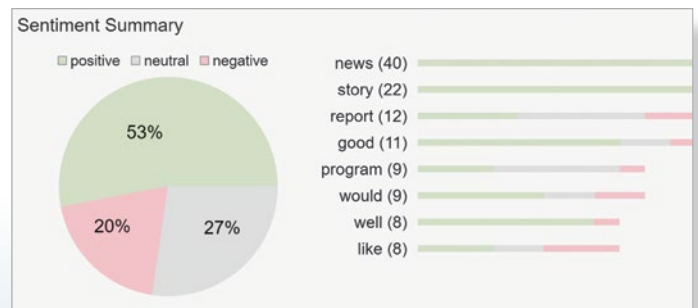
"But once I saw a session in action, I realized that there is someone from Invoke who is

serving as host by moderating the respondent discussion while also discussing key insights with the client, all in real-time. And the technology built into the platform automatically provides helpful visual aids, including the ability to see individual responses as well as rolled-up responses. You get so much rich data in real-time, and you have the ability to ask additional questions in real-time to probe deeper if something comes up that you hadn't thought of. And you also have the ability to dive deeper in one-on-one chats with respondents."

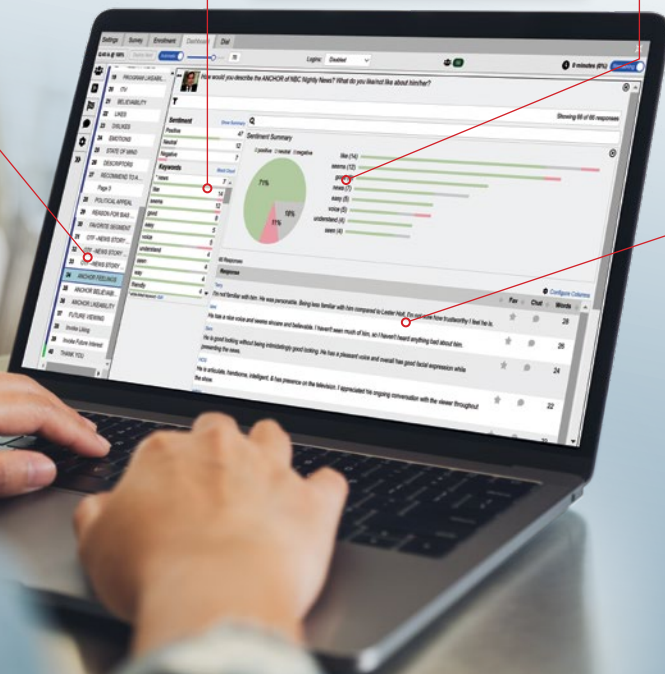
*Real-time charting of data such as keywords and overall sentiment*



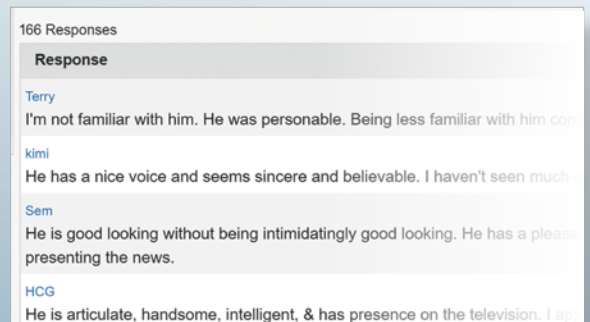
*Sentiment summary shows rolled-up data in easy to visualize charts and graphs*



*Easy to navigate by section and questions*



*Real-time responses with the ability to chat directly with participant*







**T**o understand more about Invoke's powerful platform and unique approach to testing screened content, here are four case studies that demonstrate how producers and distributors are using Invoke's cloud-based technology.

### Case Study No. 1: Pity for the Pooch

Invoke was asked to test-screen a Super Bowl TV commercial for a beer company. In the animated ad that the company tested, a dog was slumped over at the end of the spot, tired after a day of fetching beers. Participants didn't like the ending because they felt bad for the dog. Based on this response, the beer company redid the ending, closing the spot with a shot of the dog relaxing in the pool and adding a "call to action" tag to help rescue dogs. The revised commercial was well-received by the audience and the press, including *USA Today*, which hailed the spot as one of the 25 best Super Bowl commercials of the past 25 years.

### Case Study No. 2: The Name Game

A TV series was adapted from a movie of the same name, but with different characters. In particular, the main character in the TV series was dramatically different from the main character in the movie, changing the entire theme of the series. During a test-screening of the pilot episode, participants provided feedback that suggested the title of the series should change so that it reflects the theme of the new show rather than the theme of the original movie. As a result, the series premiered on a streaming service with a new name – and was so well-received that it was renewed for a second season.

### Case Study No. 3: Laughter, the Best Medicine

Invoke test-screened a new animated series from a children's TV network with two different viewing groups. Invoke's research team spoke with each group simultaneously – one group consisting of children, 6-11, who watched the show with their parents, and the other group made up of adults, 18-34, who were fans of the network in their own right. Both groups were shown two unfinished episodes and asked to use a slider dial to indicate moment-by-moment interest. After watching the episodes, they answered questions so the producers could get more detailed insights. A major finding here was that humor was a big driver of the show's appeal, and that different types of humor appealed to different age groups. Kids responded well to the physical, slapstick humor, while adults liked the jokes, references, and deadpan humor. The key takeaway point was that humor is a key factor in the show's future success, and that different types of humor should continue to be used to attract a wider audience.

### Case Study No. 4: Managing Privacy

A social media network asked Invoke to test new privacy features among its heaviest users. The client wanted to test two ways that privacy features were shown to users to find out which option these users liked better. The overwhelming majority, 80%, preferred the option in which privacy features are shown in the feed, with over 70% believing such an option makes it easier to manage privacy and thus has value. The new insights allowed users to feel more empowered to control their experience and information.

## Virtual Screening Research for Real-Time, Consumer-Driven Decisions

Thanks to virtual test-screenings enabled by the Invoke platform, the pitfalls of traditional research can be put in the past. No longer do clients need to deal with location

restrictions, wait for time-sensitive results, struggle to recruit the right participants, or worry about security. The Invoke platform enables clients to glean valuable insights from their target audience

with the space, speed, scale, selectivity, and security they require to make critical decisions from ideas and storyboards through production to rough cuts.



Visit the Invoke website at [invoke.com](https://invoke.com)  
to learn more about this powerful platform  
and request a demo.

