

Live streaming

Engaging the widest possible audience



Image courtesy of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery. I Want! I Want! Art & Technology exhibition.

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Keen to reach the widest possible audience, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery experimented with live streaming to overcome barriers and reach new target groups.



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Live streaming

Engaging the widest possible audience

We wanted to explore new ways of reaching the widest possible audiences for Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

I was planning the marketing campaign for our I Want! I Want!: Art & Technology exhibition and it seemed fitting to experiment with digital engagement.

My colleague Jon from our Learning team had been thinking about live streaming for a while so we teamed up to make it happen.

We aimed to overcome barriers to seeing the exhibition and raise the profile of the Museum and Art Gallery to attract more physical visitors.



Planning the live streams

While we wanted to reach the widest possible audience we also had two specific target groups in mind: young people and people over the age of 75.

We arranged a planning session and Jon and I looked at which elements of the exhibition might suit different audiences.

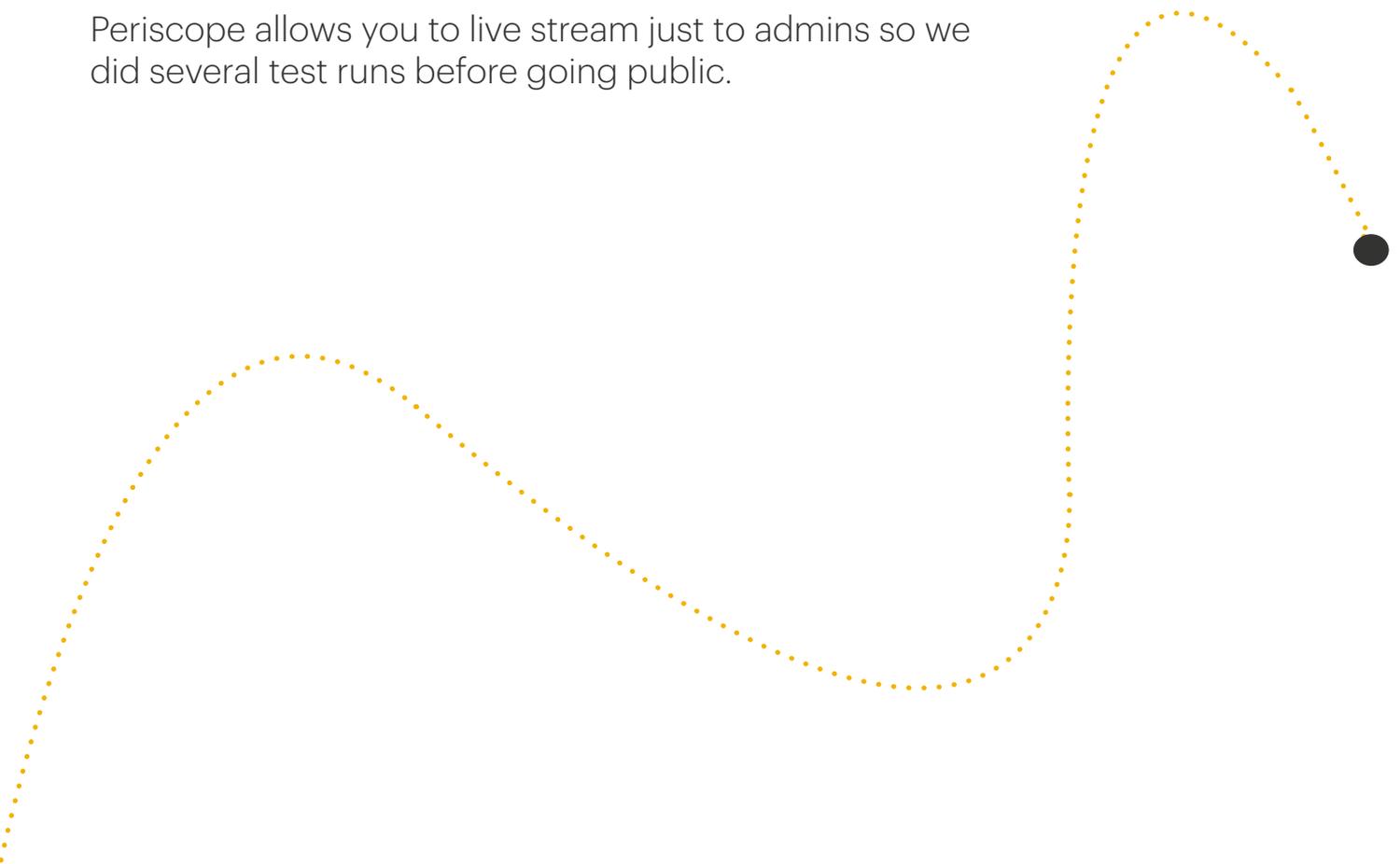
We focused on the pieces relating to particular themes. Jon was able to answer live questions around the theme, while presenting the artwork itself.

Testing the tech

The next step was to test the technology. We needed to check the picture quality and identify whether there were weak wifi spots that we needed to avoid in the gallery.

We used an iPad to film and live stream via Periscope — a live video streaming app. Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery already had an established Twitter following and the staff involved all had Twitter accounts that could be linked as admins to Periscope.

Periscope allows you to live stream just to admins so we did several test runs before going public.



Live streaming into care homes

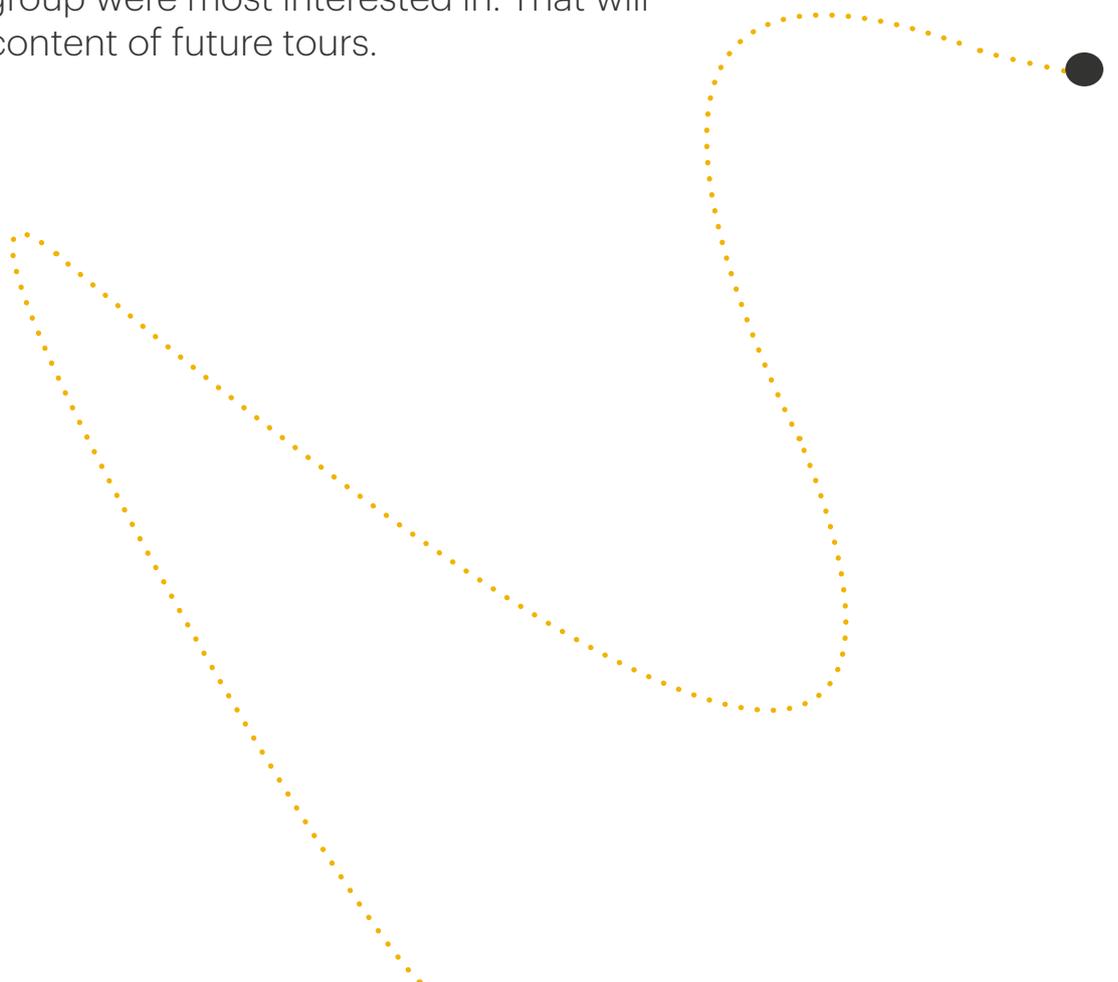
For the over 75 age group, we knew that physically getting to the Museum and Art Gallery could be a barrier to engaging with the exhibition. For this audience, live streaming was a way of taking the experience to them.

We live streamed the exhibition directly into a care home. Jon sat with residents showing the live stream on an iPad while a Museum Enabler filmed the exhibition on a mobile phone.

We kept the live stream private so it was more like a video call, which meant that residents could control the tour. If they didn't like a piece Jon would tell the Museum Enabler to move on or return to a piece they liked. It was their experience.

Some of the residents weren't able to communicate verbally so Jon observed how they responded. We focused particularly on visually engaging pieces that really stimulated the senses.

The feedback from the care home was positive. Giving residents control of the tour also enabled us to learn about what the group were most interested in. That will help inform the content of future tours.



Public live streams

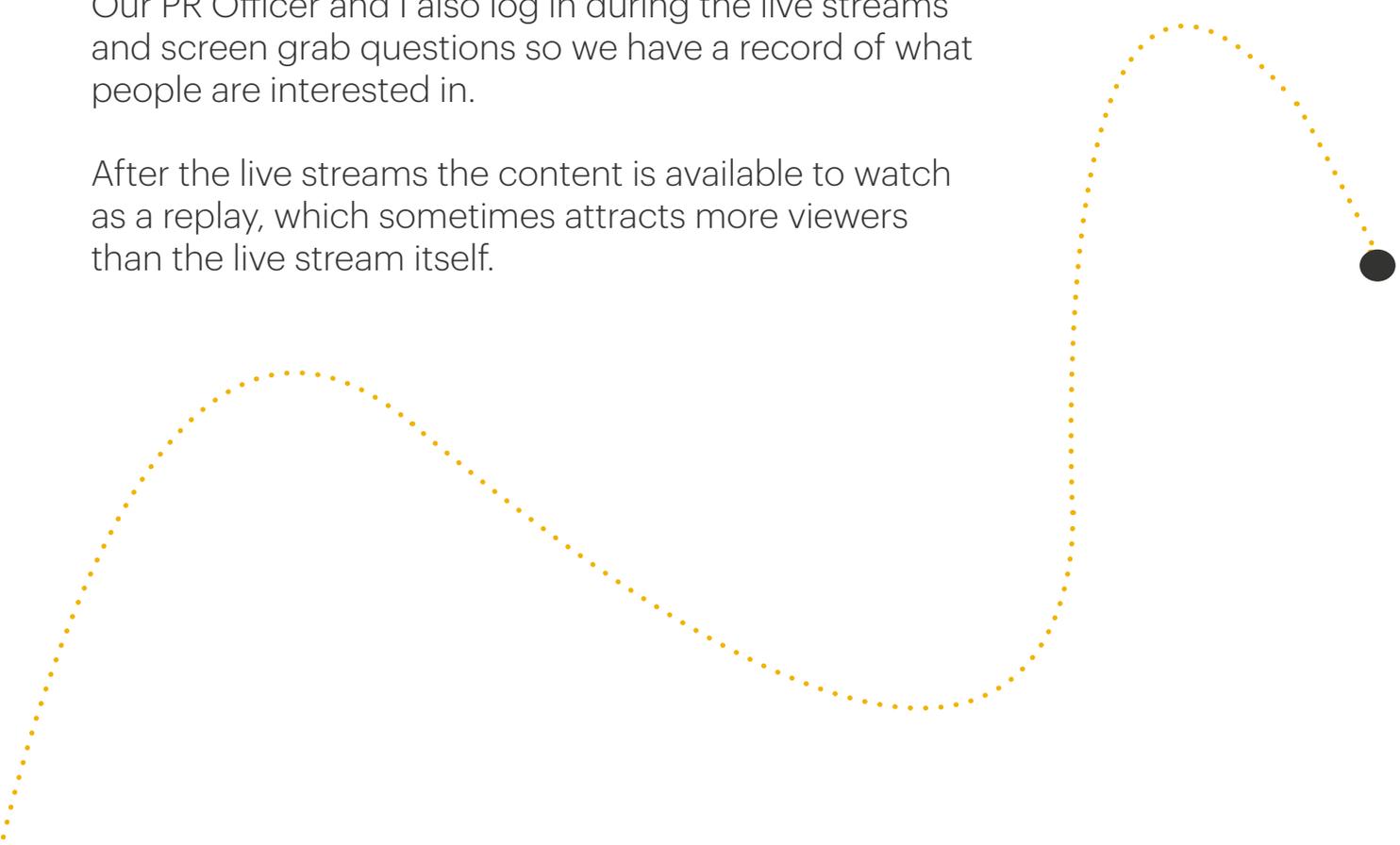
To attract younger and more diverse audiences, we did public live streams via Periscope. We knew Periscope had a young following and we tailored our content to appeal to a younger audience.



Jon presents the live streams and responds to questions from viewers who are watching live. We have had a lot of international viewers so the questions often come in different languages. Jon deals with that by asking people to use emojis.

Our PR Officer and I also log in during the live streams and screen grab questions so we have a record of what people are interested in.

After the live streams the content is available to watch as a replay, which sometimes attracts more viewers than the live stream itself.

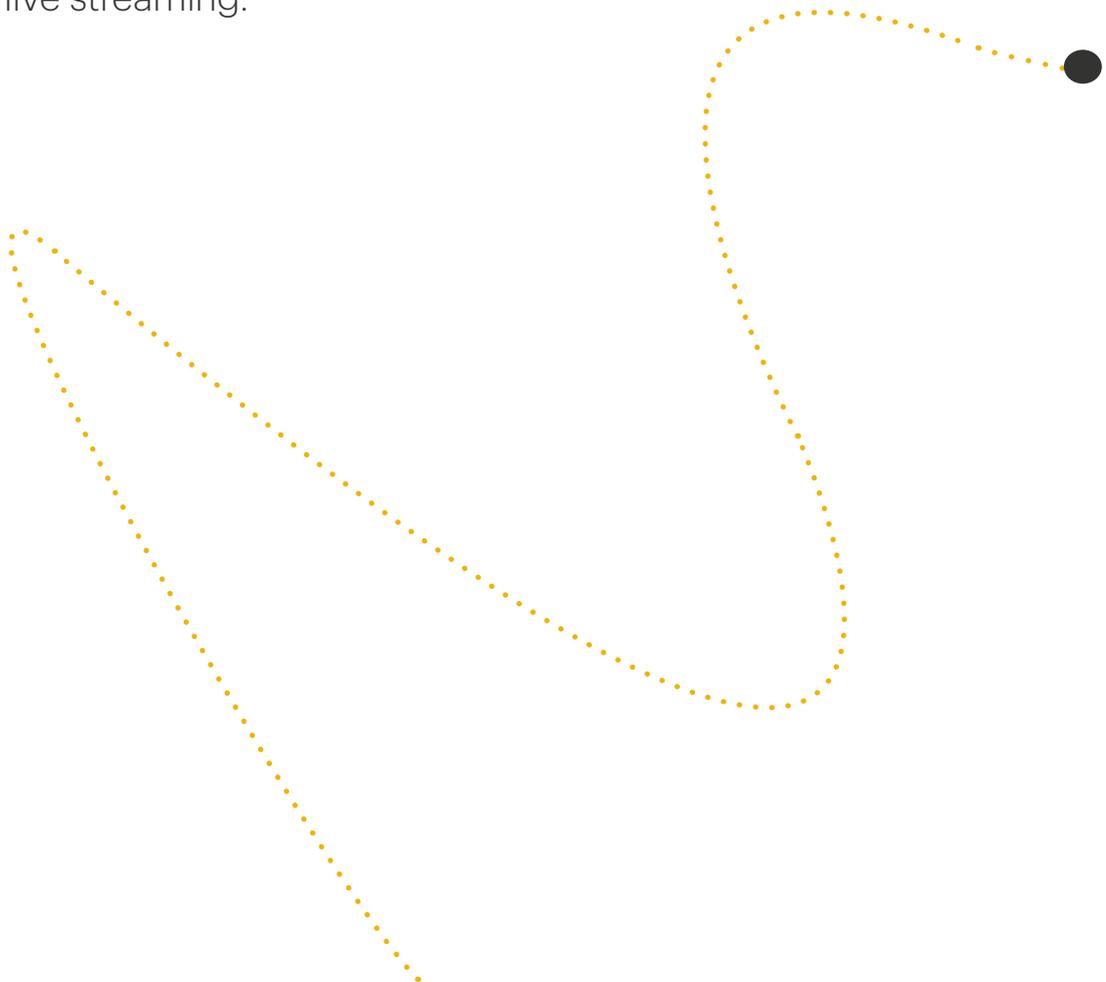


Impact

Building a digital audience significantly increased the reach of the I Want! I Want! exhibition and the organisation.

- One of our live streams was picked up and featured by Periscope TV, reaching over 22,000 viewers.
- We've engaged over 75-year-olds who wouldn't have been able to visit the gallery otherwise.
- We're starting to see more young people and first time attenders visiting the gallery.
- Experimenting in this field opened up the opportunity for us to work with the BBC on their recent Birmingham Digital Cities week. We live streamed into one of their events to speak about innovative use of digital technology in an arts and cultural context.

We need to spend more time on Periscope analytics to identify who our digital viewers are and how that audience compares to our physical visitors. Developing that understanding will help us build the case for further investment in live streaming.



What we've learned along the way

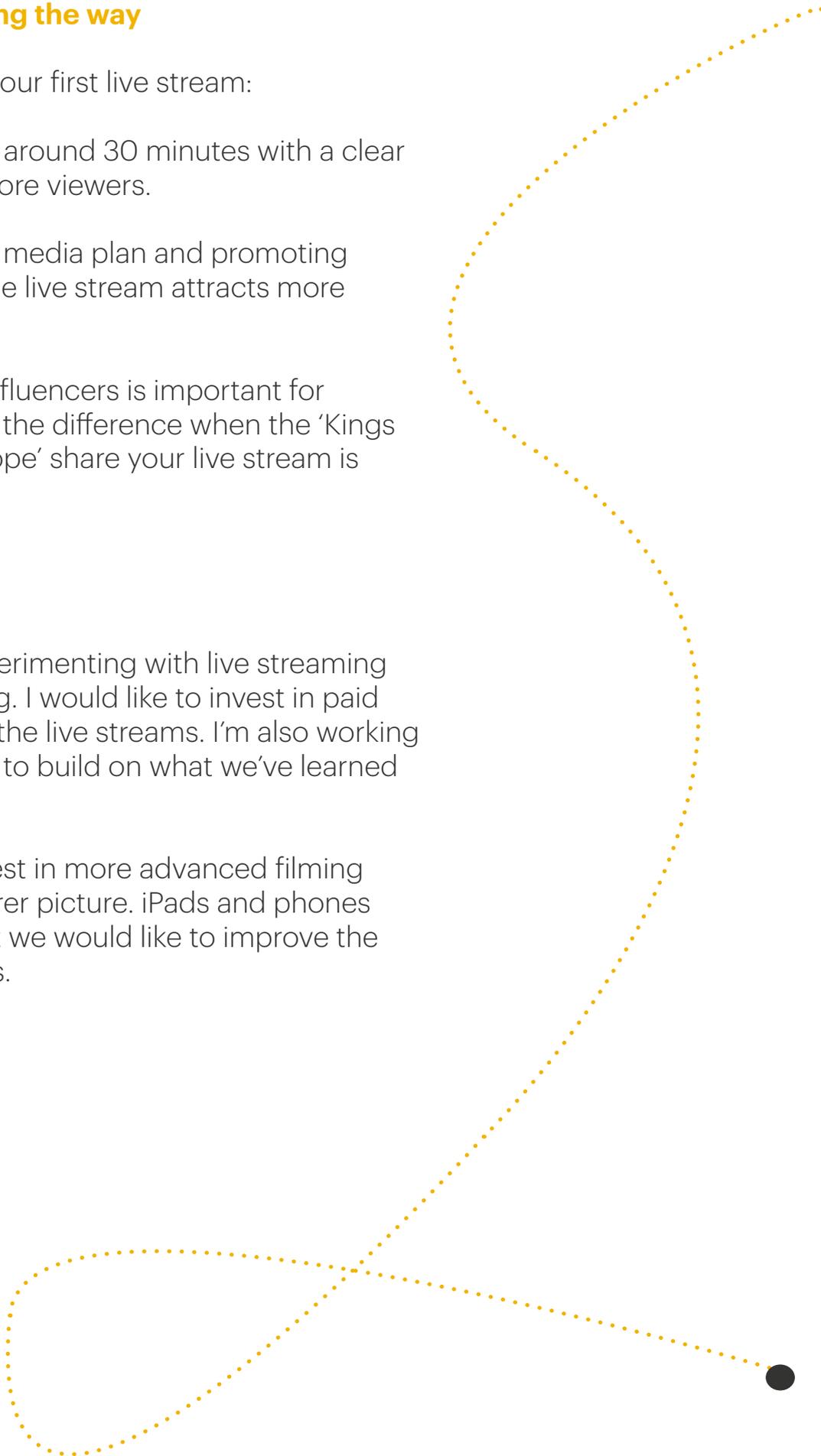
We've learned a lot since our first live stream:

- Longer live streams of around 30 minutes with a clear theme tend to have more viewers.
- Having a strong social media plan and promoting a specific theme for the live stream attracts more viewers.
- Engaging Periscope influencers is important for building a following — the difference when the 'Kings and Queens of Periscope' share your live stream is noticeable.

What's next?

We want to continue experimenting with live streaming and building our following. I would like to invest in paid social media to promote the live streams. I'm also working on an influencer strategy to build on what we've learned so far.

We would also like to invest in more advanced filming equipment to give a clearer picture. iPads and phones are great to start with but we would like to improve the quality of our live streams.



Recommendations

Set up a Periscope account — getting to know the app and how it works is an important first step. Watch live streams and get a feel for what works well.

Have a strong social media plan — you need to signpost people to the live stream with the time, date and theme so they know when to tune in.

Make the content different — doing something different and specific makes content stand out and it's more likely to be featured on Periscope TV.

Identify a theme and an audience — if you're doing a public live stream you'll reach a diverse audience but focusing on a specific audience and relevant theme will make it more engaging.

Think about audiences beyond young people — people often think about young people when they think of digital but live streaming is a great way of overcoming physical access barriers experienced by older audiences.

Be clear about why you're doing it — having a clear plan about what we wanted to achieve helped us make live streaming work for our organisation.

Read tips on the [Periscope website](#) — there are lots of useful tips and articles on the Periscope website to help you get started and learn how to use the app effectively.



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