



About Saudi Telecom Company (STC)

- Telecom Services Provider
- Headquartered in Riyadh
- www.stc.com.sa

Goals

- Increase brand loyalty in KSA within younger, digital-savvy audience
- Promote product offerings through engaging, subtle messaging
- Become top-of-mind brand beyond the telecom landscape

Approach

- Created storytelling platform in the form of two YouTube series
- Commissioned YouTube stars to develop native content
- Integrated subtle references to STC product offerings
- Used advanced remarketing techniques to amplify content

Results

- Several episodes surpassed 50% organic views, 40% view-through rates and 70% average view durations
- Significant growth in recurrent viewing across episodes, with over 60% of viewers having watched a previous episode
- 50X increase in YouTube and Google searches, with episode titles leading top-of-mind searches within the telco landscape
- Tripled channel's daily organic visitor activity year-on-year

Using native content and advanced remarketing, Saudi Telecom Company (STC) builds and mobilizes loyal audiences on YouTube

From telco advertising to content development

As the incumbent national operator in a highly competitive telco market, STC wanted to embrace digital at the core of its strategy and win within the younger digital-savvy audience. The challenge was to create content that would earn customers' brand love while keeping in line with the company's strategic aims, such as communicating the functional benefits of products and advancing the corporate social responsibility program.

STC embarked on a digital-first content development plan and partnered with YouTube stars to develop two web series. The first – "Rayih Rayih" – took an innovative twist on traditional advertising by integrating storytelling into the promotion of a roaming SIM card and subtly showcasing the benefits of this STC product. The series centered on four friends traveling the world and sharing their experiences through an iPad-faced puppet connected by a SIM card to their friend back home.

The second series – "Saudi Hero" – consisted of four episodes aiming to deliver on the company's social agenda of promoting good citizenship. The series told the story of a hero trying to encourage positive habits among Saudis, all set within a comedy context.

"STC was one of the early adopters of this approach in MENA," explains Ahmed Al Sahhaf, General Manager of STC's Marketing Communication, Consumer Business Unit. "Over time, we built our capabilities around understanding ever-changing digital consumer insights with advanced analytics, delivering digital-only productions with agility and developing our ability to respond and amplify the power of this content with real-time engagement."

Creating a loyal audience

To amplify the content, Starcom MediaVest Group (SMG) worked closely with the STC team on developing the right media approach. Advanced remarketing was integral to the activity, with the aim of building audiences that would move across episodes and – through their engagement – become the catalyst for more organic growth in viewership.

Positive remarketing on specific segments allowed targeting those users who had viewed preceding episodes with a more recent episode. Negative remarketing was used to maximize unique reach, so users who had viewed an episode wouldn't get served the same episode again.

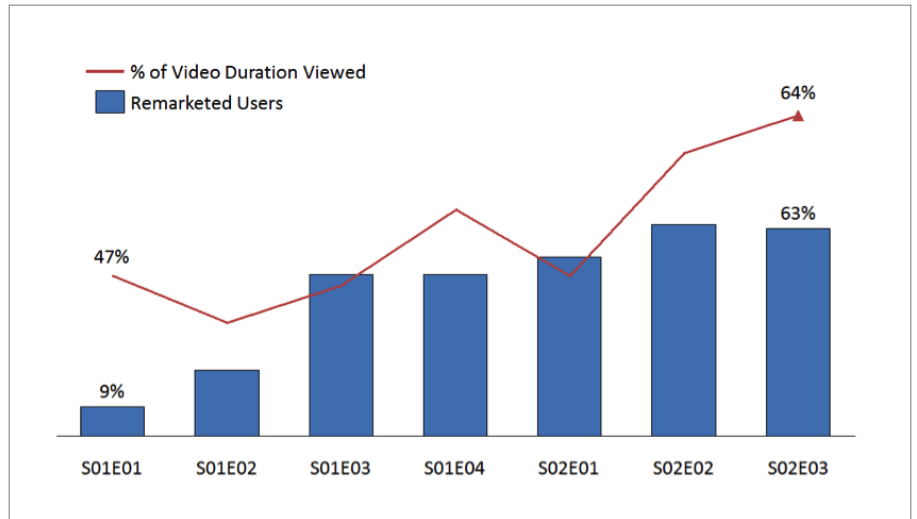
Using these tactics, STC managed to create a loyal fan base that continued to grow over time. "Thanks to the remarketing platform Google offers, we could adopt a sequential remarketing approach across the series – designed to capitalize on a growing audience of engaged viewers and successfully improve engagement metrics," explains Ramzi Ghanem, Managing Director of SMG in Saudi Arabia.

"By working closely with the YouTube and Google teams, we have been able to increase our brand exposure and to tap into the right audience segment with near surgical precision."

— Amjad Shaker, GM of Corporate Communications, Saudi Telecom Company

Both series became national hits. Certain episodes hit highs of more than 50% organic views and view-through rates of more than 40%. And despite the relatively long format of the "Rayih Rayih" series (more than five minutes per episode), the average view duration across all episodes exceeded 50%, while reaching more than 70% amongst channel subscribers. More than 60% of the viewers of the season finale had watched one or more previous episodes, with improving engagement measured as longer view-times.

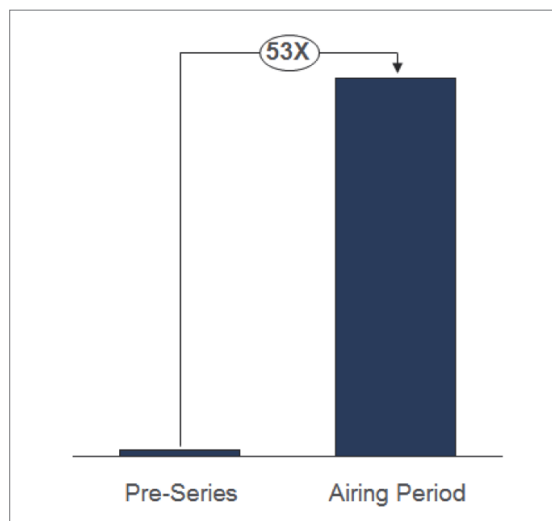
The impact on the STC channel was profound: in less than three months, subscribers doubled, while the new content generated around 30% of the entire channel watch-time history and 50% of its engagement.



Above: More than 60% of the viewers of the "Rayih Rayih" season finale had watched one or more previous episodes, with improving engagement measured as longer view-times.

A top-of-mind audience hub

During the airing period of the two series, a significant growth in top-of-mind search activity for the STC brand – a fifty-fold increase – was recorded across both Google Search and YouTube. What's more "Rayih Rayih" and "Saudi Hero" emerged as leading search terms within the telco landscape, far exceeding the volumes of the main telco brands.



Left: An analysis of organic search trends for "STC," "Rayih Rayih" and "Saudi Hero" on YouTube and Google found that the volume of daily searches surged by a factor of 53.

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"We placed native content development at the heart of our strategy for reaching and engaging with the new generation."

**— Ahmed Al Sakhaf, General Manager,
Consumer Marketing Communication,
Saudi Telecom Company**

"Being the largest telco in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia propels us to challenge ourselves and to offer highly engaging content," observes Amjad Shaker, GM of Corporate Communications. "STC's customers are very active on social media and hence we needed to offer them an even more compelling reason to be attracted to our content. YouTube provides an excellent digital marketing platform for STC to deliver this content with near surgical precision, and to allow real time feedback and engagement."

Launching the content in episodes and distributing marketing messages through effective media to maximize reach led users to make repeat visits to the channel and explore other content across STC's social platforms. This behavior was sustained post-launch, even when new episodes were no longer being uploaded, as the YouTube channel was transformed into an audience hub, with daily organic visitor activity triple that of the previous year.

Following these successes, STC went a step further with a series of online activations giving fans a chance to "live the experience" as they travel to Turkey with two friends and the puppet. During this trip, new complementary content was created by consumers themselves and uploaded to STC social media sites, generating even more engagement and driving further loyalty.



Left and above: STC's innovative YouTube series won the 2015 Effie Award for Best Youth Marketing Campaign.