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Fiat Super Bowl Spot: Building a Brand, Italian Style

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Some of the 2015 Super Bowl ads were memorable. Others not so much. A few of them left me thinking, “Huh?”

And then there was the [Fiat ad](#).

Chrysler-owned Fiat’s most recent U.S. campaign has been promising an Italian experience here in America. Ads featuring cars driving off the coast of Italy and re-emerging on American beaches delivered that promise in a memorable and direct way. Those who connect with the Fiat brand aren’t looking for German engineering, or safety first, or even “the driving experience.” They’re connecting with the Italian experience. Sunday’s ad was another homage to that same brand promise.

As a brand guy, I appreciate when a brand forges an emotional connection with its audience. It’s a tightrope walk—a little too far to the left or the right, and you end up with the [creepy Nationwide ad](#), or the celebrated but [sappy Budweiser spot](#). Lathering an ad with sentimentality does not guarantee an emotional connection with your brand.

But Fiat knows its audience and their Super Bowl spot proved that in spades. It felt so authentic it could easily run on Italian television. It was smart, confidently sexy, charming, funny, memorable, flawlessly edited, and direct in its message. Decidedly Italian.

There’s a reason millions of tourists flock to Italy every year. They want to experience the passion. It’s everywhere in Italy. In the food, the fashion, the architecture. My Italian girlfriend freely admits that she’d go back to Rome just for the gelato. With this ad, Fiat instantly transports the viewer to the streets of Italy, and captures the spirit of that passion in just 60 seconds.

When companies spend a fortune on advertising during the big game, they’re not necessarily focused on building their brand. Generating click-through, fueling conversation on-line and at the water cooler, having their spot go viral, and standing out among the competition are all key drivers for the Super Bowl advertiser. But it’s refreshing to see a brand reaching those goals while making the most of a great brand-building opportunity.

I watched the game on Sunday with my two sons and my girlfriend. Our opinions may have differed on certain commercials, but there were two things we all agreed on. First, the Seahawks’ last play should have been a running play. And second, the Fiat ad won big.

What are your thoughts? In your opinion, were most of the ads nothing more than a one-off cry for attention, or did any of them go a step further and truly build their brand?