Business Communication
Outlining Written Sources

The purpose of this activity is to give you the opportunity to evaluate written information and to create an outline from written source material. Working in groups, read the AP article and identify the main idea, the major points, and the claims and the evidence used. Once you have done so, put these items in a standard outline format of your choosing. You may use the back of these pages for your outline.

Amateur Ads Follow Super Bowl Tradition

By SETH SUTEL, AP Business Writer

February 4, 2007 - NEW YORK - Along with the trademark Clydesdales, talking animals and high-end computer graphics, there was a new entry this year in the annual showdown of advertisers in the Super Bowl: amateurs.

Starting in the first quarter, a goofy spot for Doritos showing a hapless driver distracted by a pretty woman passing by marked the first time a purely amateur-created ad aired during the Super Bowl. Frito-Lay, the PepsiCo Inc. division that makes Doritos, ran an online competition to pick the winning spot.

Katie Crabb, a freshman at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, was the winner of a separate contest by General Motors Corp. and had her idea for an ad made into reality by Chevrolet's marketing division.

Despite being made by a newcomer, that ad was true to the tradition of using oddball humor in Super Bowl ads, showing a number of men stripping off their shirts — and some other articles of clothing — at the sight of a new Chevy HHR rolling down the street.

Sight gags were back, including one from Bud Light early in the game showing a rather unusual tactic for winning at rock-paper-scissors — throwing an actual rock at the head of your opponent. The gag wasn't completely new, however, since last year Sprint Nextel Corp. featured a phone with a "crime deterrent" — which turned out to be throwing the phone at someone's head.

FedEx Corp. combined a sight gag with another trademark of big ticket Super Bowl spots, fancy computer graphics, with an other-worldy ad showing an office worker drifting off into space from the world's first office on the moon, only to be clobbered by a passing meteor.

A lot is riding on the ads, and not just because CBS Corp. is charging as much as $2.6 million for a 30-second spot during the game. With some 90 million people watching, it's the most-viewed program all year on television and the ads are subject to intense scrutiny, both by amateurs and the marketing industry.

Coca-Cola Co. was back in the game after a long absence, taking on its rival Pepsi with a number of creative ads, including an homage to Black History Month with an understated ad showing the changing shapes of Coke bottles over time as milestones in black history appeared alongside. That ad referred indirectly to the fact that, for the first time, both coaches in the game are black, and at least one other spot also highlighted Black History Month.

Some of the uses of humor didn't resonate well with experts. Stephen Greyser, a professor at Harvard Business School specializing in communications and the business of sports, said the rock-throwing spot by Anheuser-Busch Cos.' Bud Light was "attention-getting" but also "had a nasty character to it."

Bud Light, which often swings for the fences with wacky jabs at humor, scored better with Greyser with a different spot showing an auctioneer saying wedding vows at hyper-fast speed. Greyser said that spot had a much broader appeal.

The job-search company CareerBuilder ditched its longtime office-monkey pitchmen of years past in favor of a jungle combat scene among office workers, where office supplies become weapons. Think of "Dilbert" meets "Lord of the Flies."

Tim Calkins, a marketing professor at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University who runs a panel of students to rate the ads, called this year's batch a "mixed bag," saying advertisers were "being safe," with no one "pushing the edge of either creativity or taste."

An ad early in the game for Blockbuster Inc. with computer animations of animals trying to push, click and — ouch — drag an actual mouse resonated well with members of his panel, who said it was creative and also delivered the company's message. The panel found a spot by King Pharmaceuticals Inc. showing a guy dressed up in a giant red heart costume "puzzling," while Garmin International Inc.'s oddball spot with a showdown between a superhero-like character and a monster made from maps was deemed "hard to follow."

Later in the game, Bud Light won laughs with a spot showing a guy clearly losing points with his girlfriend by wanting to pick up a hitchhiker on a dark road, despite the fact that he's carrying an axe. Everything turns out fine after the hitchhiker reassures the man that it's actually just a bottle opener.

Revlon was one of a rare few to appeal to the female audience, unveiling a spot with scenes of the singer Sheryl Crow on tour and doing a rendition of Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away." The NFL itself, meanwhile, got into the "user-generated" them with a spot near the end of the game whose idea was contributed by a fan, Gino Bona, of Portsmouth N.H., taking a light look at the anguish fans go through at the end of the NFL season.