

General Audience Preferred Writing Styles in Smartphone Marketing: A Pilot Study

Seth Jantz

Research suggests that the effects of scientific jargon on general audiences are discouraged. Shulman et al. (2020) found that when scientific jargon is used to relay information to a general audience, this creates a negative experience for the reader, making them "more aware of the intergroup dynamics at play" and causing them to "report lower levels of scientific self-schema" (or confidence in the information). Zimmermann & Jucks (2018) found that credibility issues arise in the minds of the reader when more jargon is used to explain health information to that general audience. These studies showed that jargon in applied science writing for general audiences does not work well. But, what about jargon in marketing environments? Marketing environments are mostly geared towards large general audiences as well. Technical communication centers around accessibility, and marketing centers around selling products and services to consumers. Technical communicators can use *plain language* to explain information, but I wondered what kind of writing marketers use. For context for my research, I examined a professional product description to see how a marketer wrote in the real world and found that the product description used *jargon* and *adspeak*. Using this information for my pilot study, I wanted to understand better if *jargon* has the same effect on general audiences in a marketing environment that previous research has shown in other environments.

Background

Shulman et al. (2020) and Zimmermann & Jucks (2018) focused their research on jargon in scientific, biological, and social environments. I sought to focus my research on the marketing environment using technical communication aspects. In this section, I will first compare technical communication to marketing to show how these two fields differ in their writing. Then I will define *plain language*, *jargon* and *adspeak* to allow for a better understanding of these three key terms. Lastly, I will end with the iPhone 14 Pro product description analysis in which I learned the context of jargon in a real-life marketing setting.

Technical Communication Compared to Marketing

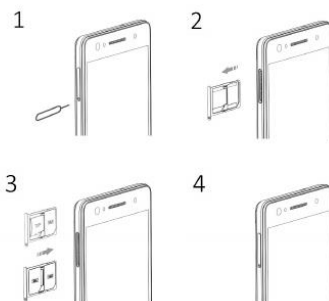
For my research, I needed to understand the differences and similarities between technical communication and marketing. The Society for Technical Communication states, "Technical communication involves the delivery of clear, consistent and factual information—often stemming from complex concepts—for safe and efficient use and effective comprehension by users." (n.d., para. 1). For example, a technical communicator works to explain complex information in an accessible way—much like Figure 1 uses visual aids to help the reader understand what each step is referring to.

Getting started

- Thank you for choosing Infinix smartphone. We hope this product will bring you a brand new experience.

Inserting SIM card

1. Push the holder in the SIM card slots next to the thimble hole it pops out .
2. Place the SIM cards face down and align it with the opening of the holder .
3. Insert them into the SIM card slots of the phone properly .



1

Figure 1: Example of Technical Communication Writing
(Infinix, n.d.)

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *marketing* as the "act or process of selling" of "goods from producer to consumer" (n.d., Marketing). Therefore, writing in marketing would include techniques for selling a product. There is a connection between technical communication and marketing as—both fields work to inform and teach a reader. The major difference is that technical communication does not generally employ writing techniques that push a product or idea onto a consumer.

For example, Figure 2 uses glamorous phrases like "Optimized Camera Sensor" and "Hybrid Focusing System." These phrases may be exciting to read, but we can almost be certain that a general audience may not know what these phrases are referring to.



Figure 2: Example of Marketing Writing
(Masood, 2017)

Defining Key Terms

I define the terms *plain language*, *jargon* and *adspeak* below for a better understanding of these key terms.

Plain Language

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 defines *plain language* as "Writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject of field and intended audience. " (n.d., What is plain language?). Plain language should not contain complicated information but should be easy to understand while retaining the information's original meaning.

For example: "The smartphone uses technology."

The above example is a short and uncomplicated sentence—clear and easy to understand. A general audience will most likely know what "smartphone" and "technology" mean. Technical communicators can utilize plain language in their writing, for this allows for the most information to be easily accessible to a general audience.

Jargon

To further divide *jargon* in marketing, I separate technical jargon, which I refer to as *jargon*, and marketing jargon which I refer to as *adspeak*. Hirst (2003) defines *jargon* as a "specialized language of any trade, organization, profession or science" that some readers may find "pretentious, excluding, [or] evasive" (p. 202). Jargon are the technical real-world terms that general audiences may find confusing.

For example: "The smartphone uses an Apple iOS proprietary system."

For a general audience, anyone outside of the technical field, the name of the Apple smartphone operating system may confuse these readers; to these readers, "Apple iOS" has become jargon.

Adspeak

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *adspeak* as the "special or distinct language that is used in advertisements" (n.d., Adspeak). Adspeak can be invented terms or phrases that a general audience may find confusing—similar to jargon. However, adspeak focuses on persuading consumers to buy a product.

For example: "The iPhone has a 2x Telephoto mode."

A general audience may find the iPhone camera feature "Telephoto mode" confusing because they have not been already exposed to this term. This is essentially the point of adspeak: to present new terms to the consumer. Though a general audience may not know the adspeak terms, I theorize that a marketer hopes a general audience would find the adspeak terms new and interesting, making the reader curious about the product and thus potentially purchasing the product.

Apple iPhone 14 Pro Analysis

Understanding that technical communicators and marketers will use different types of language to achieve different types of ends, I wanted to examine an example of a professional marketing product description to see how these interact in the real world. Doing so would give me the needed context to frame my research questions for my pilot study. To do this, I analyzed a part of the iPhone 14 Pro product description from Apple's website.

Jargon

Apple's product description uses jargon. For example, in Figure 3 (see below), Apple states the iPhone 14 Pro uses a "48MP camera" and a "smartphone chip." These are technical terms referring to the number of pixels found in the camera, which contributes to the camera's image quality. The number "48" and the abbreviation "MP" (million pixels) are not invented terms by Apple but words that technology manufacturers use to describe their products. The term "smartphone chip" is also not invented by Apple, being already in circulation in the smartphone technology field.

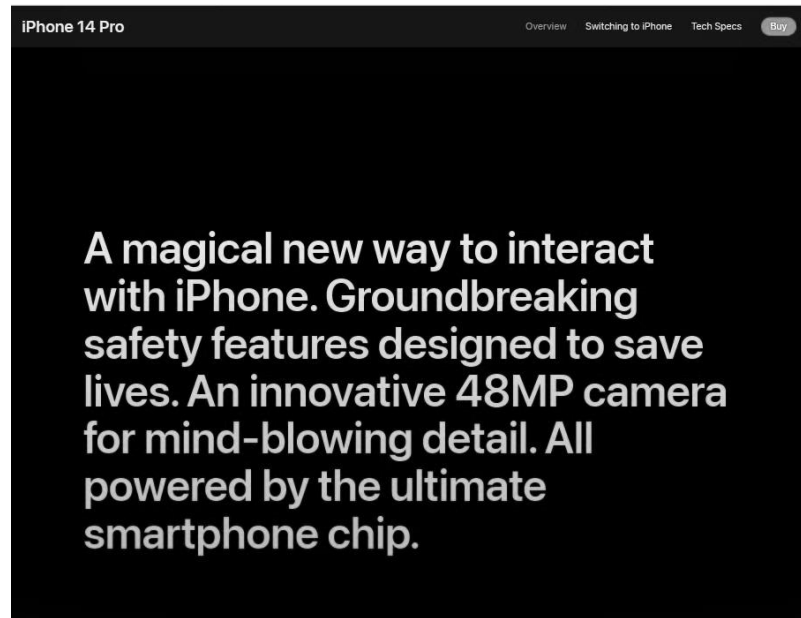


Figure 3: Example of Jargon

In another example of jargon—see Figure 4—Apple uses the phrase "6.1" and 6.7" display size." The numerical "display size" refers to the size of consumer electronics screens in the U.S., measured in inches and centimeters, diagonally. If a general audience did not already know this term, they might wonder what the phrase is referring to.

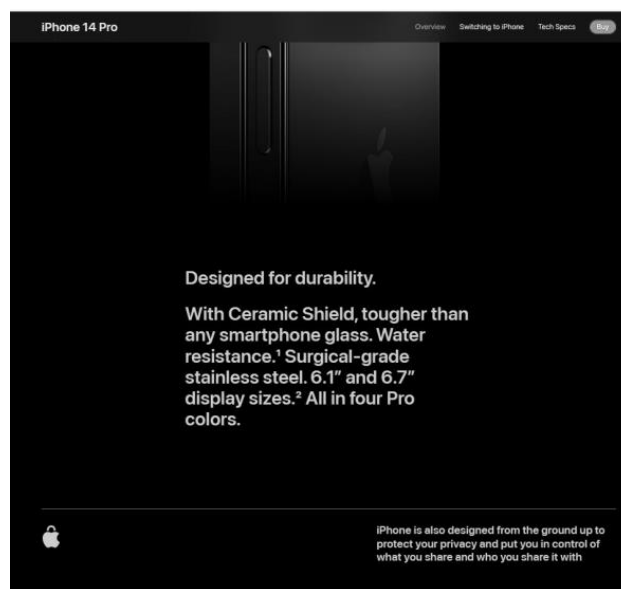


Figure 4: Example of Jargon cont.

Adspeak

Apple's iPhone 14 Pro description also uses adspeak. For example, in Figure 5, Apple uses invented names for some of their smartphone features, such as "Ceramic Shield" and "Dynamic Island." I assume Apple uses this form of adspeak to make their product sound new and novel—to persuade the reader to buy their smartphone by wanting them to believe that Apple uses the latest technology—technology that did not exist until Apple created it—essentially distinguishing the iPhone 14 Pro's features from other smartphone features on the market.

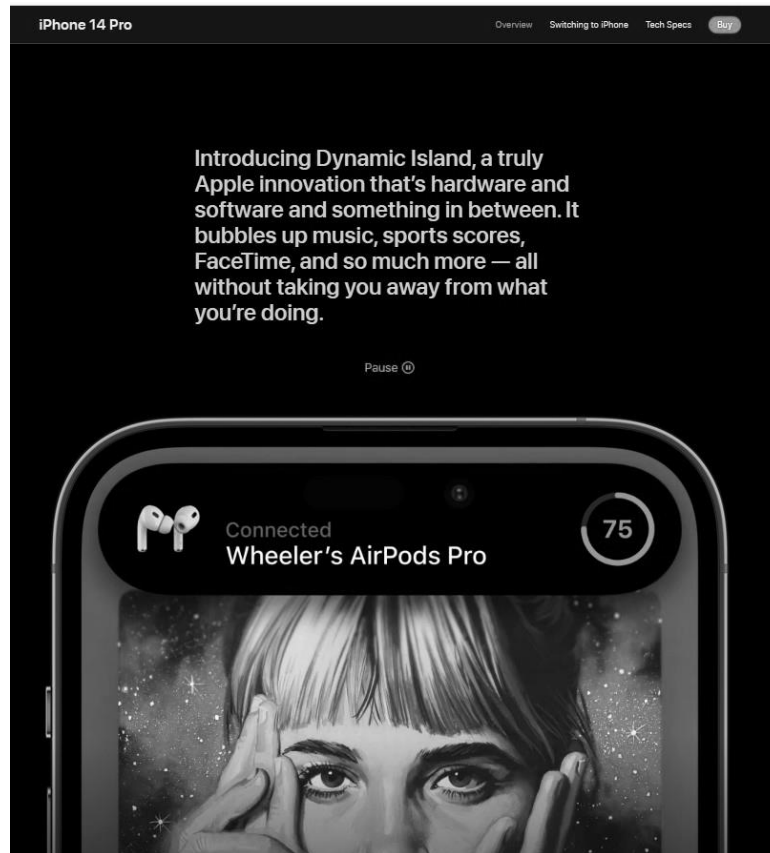


Figure 5: Example of Adspeak

In another example of adspeak, Figure 6, Apple uses several exaggerated implications—writing with the literary devices of hyperbole and metaphors. With the phrases "magical new way" and "ultimate," Apple is using hyperbole, for nothing is literally magic, and something is only ultimate until the next comes along. The phrase "mind-blowing" is hyperbole and a metaphor to mean the common saying: "This blows my mind."

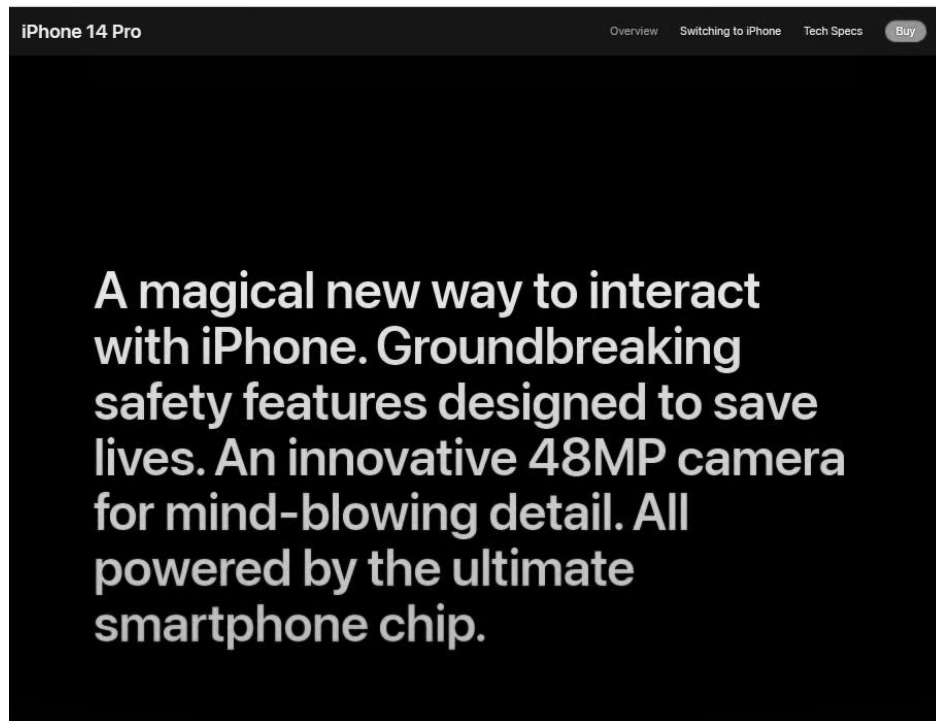


Figure 6: Example of Adspeak cont.

Analysis Conclusion

From my analysis of a professional product description, I found jargon and adspeak being used. A reader may find the jargon terms recognizable without knowing what they mean and thus attribute the jargon terms to other products with the same terminology. Similarly, a reader may not find the adspeak terms recognizable but still attribute the adspeak terms to new and interesting features that stimulate their curiosity, for the product features may be considered different from other products on the market. However, technical communicators would, by training and instinct, bristle against using jargon and adspeak and instead employ some use of plain language. Though technical communicators strive for clarity and accessibility, they also recognize that different rhetorical situations require different approaches, and the language needed in a user manual is not necessarily the same that is needed in a product description or advertisement. Therefore, my pilot study seeks to understand two questions:

Research Question 1: Would only plain language in marketing writing be more beneficial in generating interest in an online reader rather than using jargon?

Research Question 2: If plain language is more beneficial in generating interest in an online reader in marketing writing—why is that?

Methodology

From the information that I gathered on jargon from the iPhone 14 Pro product description, I created my pilot study using three different smartphone product descriptions—one written using plain language, one using jargon, and one using adspeak. I assembled these smartphone product descriptions in a questionnaire, which I distributed online. I had the participants question whether the smartphone descriptions grabbed their curiosity and interest rather than stating I was studying the use of plain language versus the use of jargon and adspeak in a marketing environment. From the participant sample I chose two participants who I knew personally and that were easily accessible to me and conducted two semi-structured interviews based off of the responses they gave to the online questionnaire to gather more qualitative data on why they responded the way they did to the three different smartphone descriptions. These two data sets supported each other, strengthening my findings. My pilot study was submitted to and approved by Park University's Institutional Review Board. In this section, I will discuss the methods I used for creating and implementing my online questionnaire, followed by a discussion of my semi-structured interviews.

Product Description Questionnaire

I created an online questionnaire using the Google program Google Forms, titled "Product Description Questionnaire." I chose this format as I felt it best resembled the environment where plain language, jargon and adspeak would most likely occur. For the framework of my questionnaire, I relied on the previously stated research from Shulman et al. (2020) and Zimmermann & Jucks (2018).

"The Effects of Jargon on Processing Fluency, Self-Perceptions, and Scientific Engagement" by Shulman et al. (2020) had "participants read one paragraph about three different scientific technologies" (p. 594). Figure 7 shows one scientific technology description used by Shulman et al (2020).

Surgical Robots Conditions.	
Jargon	No Jargon
The use of RAS in the medical field has grown each year, providing advances in super-microsurgery and decreasing revision surgery. The most popular system is the da Vinci Surgical System, where a surgeon on a remote ergonomic console operates endowrist instruments that hold many different tools such as scalpels, endoscopes and graspers. This system works because of AI integration through motion scaling and tremor reduction. Despite this, surgical robots might not be any more effective than laparoscopy, and come at a higher financial cost. Word count: 84	The use of Robotically-assisted surgical devices in medicine has grown each year, providing advances in small-scale surgery and decreasing second surgeries to correct mistakes. The most popular system is the da Vinci Surgical System, where a surgeon on a separate control panel operates robotic arms that hold different surgical tools. This system works because of programming that makes the robot's movements more precise and less shaky. Despite this, surgical robots might not be more effective than minimally invasive surgeries, and are often more expensive. Word count: 84

Figure 7: Screenshot from Shulman et al. (2020)
(Shulman et al., 2020, p. 594)

In my pilot study, I used a similar method of separating my smartphone product descriptions into three descriptions, one using plain language, one using jargon and one using adpeak. I also, like Shulman et al., kept my word count and sentence structure relatively the same.

Zimmermann & Jucks' (2018) journal article "How Experts' Use of Medical Technical Jargon in Different Types of Online Health Forums Affected Perceived Information Credibility: Randomized Experiment with Laypersons" had their participants "read experts' posts about 10 nutrition myths" (Abstract). The ten nutrition myths were "written using either low or high amounts of medical technical terms and were directed at different audiences vs. a user group mainly comprising laypersons." (Abstract). As Figure 8 shows, Zimmermann & Jucks (2018) had their participants read the health forum posts and then asked their participants to rate if they agree or disagree with various statements regarding the health forum posts.

Re: low salt diet

By *

There is some evidence that low-sodium **diet reduces blood pressure. Therefore** it shall be assumed that **high blood pressure** can lead to **heart-diseases and diseased blood vessels** in the long run. The WHO recommends to reduce the daily intake of **table salt** by 6 gram. Therefore the **high** blood pressure is supposed to lower from five to six milliliter and the **low one** from one to three milliliter. This effect would then be comparable to a **weight loss**.

Posts: Joined:

Please, evaluate the response of the expert.

Therefore enter, to which extent do you agree to the following statements.

	strongly disagree	rather disagree	I do not know	rather agree	strongly agree
How much would you agree to the answer?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The answer contains all necessary information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find the answer interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 8: Screenshot from Zimmermann & Jucks (2018)
(Zimmermann & Jucks, 2018, Appendix D)

In my pilot study, I used a similar method when evaluating my participants' interest levels in the three smartphone descriptions (see Appendix A for full Product Description Questionnaire).

Results found by Shulman et al. (2020) and Zimmermann & Jucks (2018) showed a negative effect on jargon in scientific, biological, and social contexts. I sought to join the conversation by playing off of the research findings of Shulman et al. (2020) and Zimmermann & Jucks (2018) by asking if I would find the same negative results with jargon in a marketing context, specifically with smartphone descriptions, as I theorized I would.

Figure 9 gives an example of one of the smartphone product descriptions I created. I chose different smartphone names in all three smartphone descriptions to emulate three different products.



Figure 9: Smartphone Product Description: Gazelle (Adspeak)

Fourteen participants contributed to the pilot study. To promote a somewhat random sampling for the pilot study, I had friends and family post the questionnaire's Google Form link on their social media accounts rather than mine. The social media platforms that were used included Facebook, TikTok and Twitter. After the pilot study period, I synthesized and recorded the data into a spreadsheet and then organized the data into Table 1: *Product Description Questionnaire Results* (see Appendix B for Table 1).

Semi-Structured Interviews

For my semi-structured interviews, I interviewed two participants by asking open-ended questions based on the responses the participants gave on the questionnaire (see Appendix C.1. and C.2. for full transcripts of the interviews). Interviewee #1 was a woman in her 30s, and Interviewee #2 was a man in his 80s; they both shared a low level of technical knowledge. The two participants were convenience samplings, meaning I interviewed participants that were easily accessible to me. I recorded our interviews, transcribed them, and synthesized the data into a spreadsheet and Table 1 (mentioned above).

Results

In theory, my findings would determine if the participants preferred plain language, jargon or adspeak in marketing writing. In this section, I will discuss the results of my pilot study, starting with which smartphone product descriptions the participants considered to generate the most and least interest. Then I will discuss which smartphone product description the participants disliked and liked overall.

Interest

With each of the three smartphone product descriptions, the participants were asked, "Imagine you are interested in purchasing a new smartphone. You are doing online shopping and comparing your options. Please read the product description and rate on a scale from 1 (being the least) to 10 (being the most) how curious or interested you are in learning more about the following smartphone based on the product description provided."

Least Interest: Plain language

Seventy percent of the participants stated that the Oryx (plain language) description generated the least interest, with 20% stating that the Ibex (jargon) description and 10% stating that the Gazelle (adspeak) description generated the least interest.

In theory, since the participants found the smartphone product description Oryx to generate the least interest, this could mean that the plain language—used in the Oryx description (see Figure 10)—generated the least interest.



Figure 10: Smartphone Product Description: Oryx (Plain Language)

Sixty percent of the participants stated they found the Oryx (plain language) description "too basic," and 40% stated the plain language was "not intriguing."

During my semi-structured interviews, Interviewee #1 was asked, "Would you say that you would like to be sold something in a product description?" She replied, "Yes. Because then I could find out more information about the product if I wanted to." I determined this could be why many of the participants may have found the plain language to generate the least interest.

Interviewee #2 was asked, "What do you think about the product description, Oryx?" He replied, "I like that one too. It's not quite as specific as the other one [referring to the Ibex (jargon) description]." This could also be why many participants found the plain language to generate the least interest because they would rather have specifics about the product to hold their interest in a marketing setting.

Most Interest: Jargon and Adspeak

Fifty percent of the participants stated that the Ibex (jargon) description and 50% stated that the Gazelle (adspeak) description generated the most interest. Zero of the participants stated that the Oryx (plain language) description generated the most interest.

In theory, since the participants found the smartphone product descriptions of Ibex and Gazelle to generate the most interest equally, this could mean that jargon and adspeak—used in the Ibex (see Figure 11 for the Ibex description) and the Gazelle descriptions—generated the most interest opposed the use of plain language.

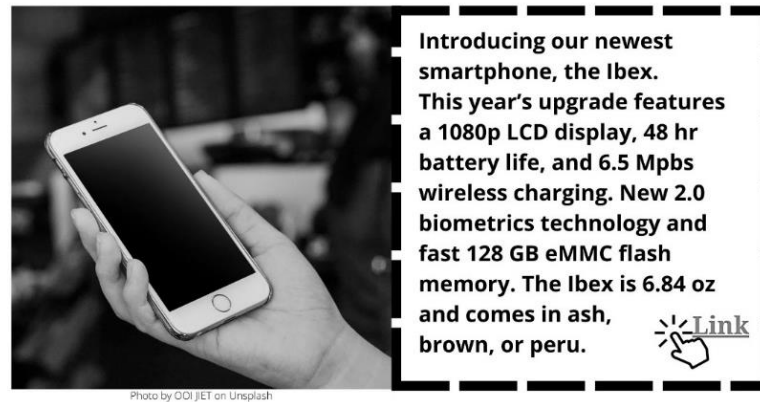


Figure 11: Smartphone Product Description Ibex (Jargon)

Thirty-three percent of the participants who found the jargon smartphone description to generate the most interest stated that the description "offered intriguing details." Twenty-eight percent of the participants stated the jargon was "easy to understand" and they "understood the details." Fifty percent of the participants stated the adspeak "offered intriguing details."

During my semi-structured interviews, Interviewee #1 stated that she would like to be sold a smartphone; she can then find out more about the product if she is interested in the smartphone (as previously discussed). Also, Interviewee #1 stated he was confused by the jargon description.

Overall Comparison

At the end of the Product Description Questionnaire, the participants were asked, "In this final section, please compare all three of the product descriptions together." — see Figure 12.

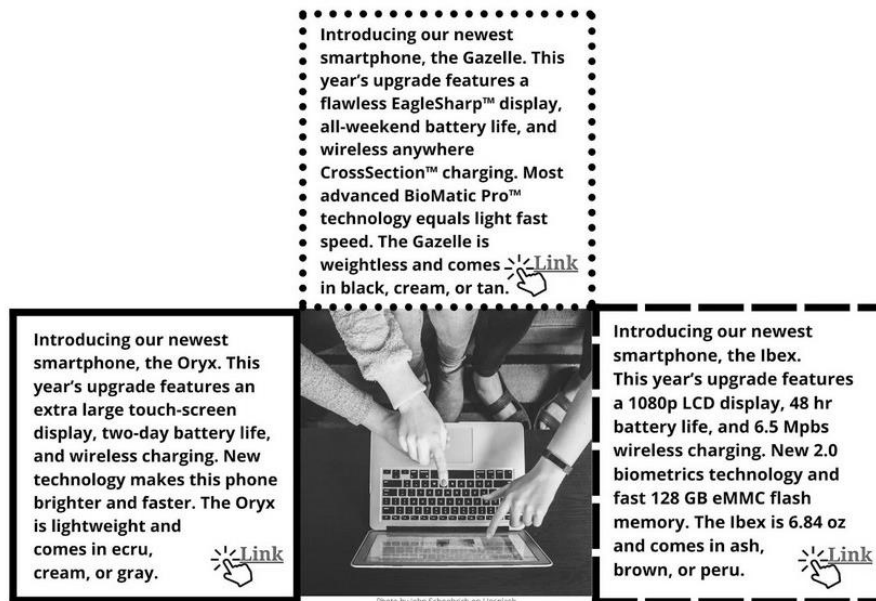


Figure 12: Screenshot of Question from Product Description Questionnaire

Least Liked: Adspeak

In an overall comparison, 58% of the participants stated they overall least liked the Gazelle (adspeak) description. Forty-two percent of participants stated they overall least liked the Ibex (jargon) description, and 0% of participants stated they overall least liked the Oryx (plain language) description.

In theory, since the participants overall least liked the smartphone description, Gazelle, as opposed to the Ibex and Oryx descriptions, this could mean that adspeak was overall least preferred in marketing writing compared to jargon (Ibex) and plain language (Oryx). Fifty percent of the participants commented that the adspeak description was "difficult to understand" and "did not make the product seem familiar or accessible."

During my semi-structured interviews, Interviewee #1 stated, referring to the Ibex (jargon) description, "The numbers were confusing. It wasn't trying to sell you anything." On the other hand, Interviewee #2 stated the Gazelle (adspeak) product description was "too nebulous," and because he was not a "techie," he did not understand what the adspeak was attempting to describe. Interviewee #2 also stated that he did not like to be sold exaggerated details about a product and that that was not "playing fair" with the consumer. Interviewee #2 also stated that the Gazelle (adspeak) and the Ibex (jargon) descriptions made him feel uncertain about the products' credibility. Moreover, I inferred that Interviewee #2 did not trust the product descriptions written in adspeak and jargon because he felt they were being less truthful about the smartphone features—supposedly because he was unfamiliar with the features.

Most Liked: Plain language and Jargon

Interestingly, in overall comparison, the participants tied again in this category, with 43% stating they overall most liked the Oryx (plain language) description and 43% stating they overall most liked the Ibex (jargon) product description. Only 14% of participants stated they overall most liked the Gazelle (adspeak) description. Furthermore, Interviewee #2 stated that his overall preferred description was the Ibex (jargon) because it contained the most specifics about the features that were familiar to him.

In theory, since the participants overall most liked the smartphone descriptions, Oryx and Ibex, as opposed to the Gazelle description, this could mean that the use of plain language and jargon was the overall most preferred writing in marketing compared to adspeak (Gazelle).

Discussion

After reviewing the Product Description Questionnaire and the semi-structured interview results, I theorize why the participants responded the way they did. In this section, I will discuss the theories and reasons I had for the results of my research.

Plain language

The participants overall liked the writing style of plain language because it was easy to understand, and thus the smartphone's features seemed more familiar. But because the plain language was easy to understand, the readers, who were pretending to be consumers, found the plain language too boring and basic to be in a

smartphone product description. These findings oppose Shulman et al. (2020) research. Shulman et al. (2020) found that "communicating scientific information to nonscientific audiences was more effectively accomplished through accommodating language" (p. 590). Though accommodating language and plain language are different, they share many similarities; however, in a marketing context, the use of plain language was not preferred. I theorize that the participants responded this way because they felt as if they were missing some form of excitement in a shopping experience they were accustomed to. It can also be inferred that after reading the plain language, consumers would move on to the next product description that offered them a more stimulating shopping experience.

Jargon

The participants were equally interested in the jargon and adspeak. However, this was for different reasons. The participants found the jargon interesting, but some indicated that too much jargon made the product seem unfamiliar. Shulman et al. (2020) found that jargon used in a scientific context when relaying to a general audience caused negative effects impeding "processing fluency" (p. 589) and that their participants became "more aware of the intergroup dynamics at play" (p. 590). These findings are similar to my participant's reactions to jargon, as some of the participants stated that they were a part of the techie group (intergroup dynamics) that knew of the jargon terms and thus enjoyed the description because the description had the specifics of the smartphone. On the other hand, some participants stated that they were not part of the techie group, and thus, the description confused them.

I theorized that, much like the adspeak smartphone description, even though the non-techie participants did not understand the technical terms, they were still interested in discovering more about these features. In other words, the participants liked the jargon because it gave details, but they needed clarification on what those details meant. It should be noted that Shulman et al. (2020) and Zimmermann & Jucks (2018) focused on general audience reactions to jargon in scientific, biological and social genres. As readers, we read certain genres for specific reasons. In scientific, biological and social genres, a reader would be interested in the knowledge they could gain from the information; however, in a marketing context, a reader would be expecting some form of performance—where the jargon in marketing copy does not altogether have to make sense but rather the idea of the terms creates enough curiosity and interest to keep the reader exploring further.

Adspeak

Adspeak was the overall least liked. I predicted that the adspeak would confuse some readers as the description contained invented names for features. However, even though the participants did not know the adspeak features, they still found the new words interesting and, in theory, would want to find out more about the features. It is important to note that the participants were intrigued by the invented terms for the adspeak smartphone features and the more specific jargon smartphone features; even when the participants did not know some of the features, several stated that this was not necessarily bad; they would have to do further research to understand the features.

I theorized that when a consumer is online shopping, a consumer is in a mind frame of excess and speed. Online readers, presumably, scan information as fast as they can, but when presented with words or phrases they do not know—this is novel—these new words are something unique, and this becomes exciting. However, I inferred that too much new information creates information overload. In milliseconds, the consumer becomes frustrated because they do not know the features and thus cannot understand what the product does. They may also become frustrated because they feel that the seller might have exaggerated these features and hence lowers the credibility and respect the consumer has for the product and the seller. Zimmermann & Jucks (2018) found similar results with their medical jargon impacting "people's assessments of [the providers] trustworthiness," showing that experts who used low levels of medical jargon were "perceived to be less competent but more integrity, more benevolent, and more accommodative" (Discussion: Principal Findings). Interestingly, my pilot study showed that jargon could lead to an audience's continued interest in a smartphone. Too much adspeak, on the other hand, leads to a negative response from the audience creating uncertainty about the smartphone's credibility.

Conclusion

I wanted to understand better if a technical communication approach to writing in marketing would be more beneficial than what may be considered the industry norm. With my pilot study, I wanted to find out if using just plain language in marketing writing would be more beneficial in generating interest—rather than employing jargon or adspeak.

With my online "Product Description Questionnaire" and my semi-structured interviews, I concluded that a reader is intrigued by words they do not know (jargon and adspeak). However, if the reader does not know certain words, I theorized that the readers' intrigue for the new words soon turns into panic and frustration as the reader feels left out of the jargon- or adspeak-driven conversation. I also concluded that while readers are comfortable reading and understanding plain language, they do not prefer just reading plain language in smartphone descriptions. The reader finds plain language in smartphone product descriptions too boring and basic—as if the consumer is missing a part of their shopping experience. I theorized that consumers want the feeling of being sold a smartphone with creative wording within the product descriptions, so they get a full and exciting shopping experience. I generalized that when writing in marketing, the use of plain language and jargon would be the most beneficial as a general audience may find this way of writing easy to understand but also interesting. Adspeak should be used sparingly—if at all—to avoid confusing the reader with terms they do not know and making the product appear to have exaggerated details that the reader may find untrustworthy. Probably not surprisingly, this way of writing in marketing is similar to what we found in the iPhone 14 Pro product description.

Further Research

Given that this is a pilot study, further research might recreate and produce a full study. I recommend that further researchers use a larger sampling pool with truly randomized participants. Furthermore, I have theorized many of the

participants' reasonings in my research. Further researchers may seek to understand these reasonings with more reliability and validity—or predict and understand their own theorized reasonings. For example, one might study product descriptions using plain language, jargon and adspeak using varying levels to determine at which amount these may be used for an optimal product description. For another example, one might study plain language, jargon and adspeak with different consumer products—looking at, for example, consumer electronics, kitchen products, and clothing.

Limitations

One limitation of my pilot study is that the sample size was small, with only fourteen participants, and was not truly random. This is due to the time constraints and the availability of participants in that period and is consistent with what is acceptable for a pilot study. A larger sampling pool would be preferable to verify the research findings better. A second limitation is that I did not gather demographic information from my online participants, which may have been useful in understanding the participant's responses and whether the participants were a part of the tech-familiar group or were not accustomed to technical information. A third limitation is that I wanted to study general audiences in marketing settings, I have realized that I never screened for tech-familiar versus non tech-familiar participants, so my pilot study results do not fully resemble a general audience.

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Appendix A

Product Description Questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research. The following questionnaire, which will ask your opinions about product descriptions, should take less than 10 minutes to complete, and only individuals at least 18 years old are allowed to participate. The purpose of this study aims to find patterns and relations in styles of commercial writing.

All responses are completely anonymous, and no personally identifying information will be collected. Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time. No compensation will be given for participation.

This research is being conducted by Seth Jantz, a student at Park University, under the supervision of Dr. Stephen David Grover. It has been approved by the Park University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Grover at david.grover@park.edu. The Park IRB can be reached at IRBchair@park.edu.

Informed Consent Verification

1. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age or older and agree to the terms described above.
 - I agree.
 - I do NOT agree.

Section Two

In this section, you will be asked to participate in a short exercise with three multiple-choice and two open-ended questions.

Imagine you are interested in purchasing a new smartphone. You are doing some online shopping and comparing your options.



Introducing our newest smartphone, the Gazelle. This year's upgrade features a flawless EagleSharp™ display, all-weekend battery life, and wireless anywhere CrossSection™ charging. Most advanced BioMatic Pro™ technology equals light fast speed. The Gazelle is weightless and comes [Link](#) in black, cream, or tan.

2. Please read the product description and rate on a scale from 1 (being the least) to 10 (being the most) how curious or interested you are in learning more about the following smartphone based on the product description provided.
 - 1 – Not Interested

- 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
 - 7
 - 8
 - 9
 - 10 – Very Interested
3. Please select the statement that best describes what made you curious or interested in learning more about the product based on the product description. Check all that apply.
 - The description was easy to understand.
 - The description was difficult to understand.
 - The description offered intriguing details.
 - The description made the product seem novel.
 - The description made the product seem familiar.
 - Other: (please describe below)
 - Nothing about the description made me curious or interested in learning more.
 4. Please help us understand why you selected the answer/s above:
 5. Please select the statement that best describes what made you LESS curious or interested in learning more about the product based on the product description. Check all that apply.
 - The description was too basic.
 - The description was difficult to understand.
 - The description offered irrelevant or unnecessary details.
 - The description made the product seem too trendy or new.
 - The description did not make the product seem familiar or accessible.
 - Other: (please describe below)
 - Nothing about the description made me less curious or interested in learning more
 6. Please help us understand why you selected the answer/s above:

Section Three

The next two sections will be the same exercise but in different writing styles.

Imagine you are interested in purchasing a new smartphone. You are doing some online shopping and comparing your options.



Photo by Madrona Rose on Unsplash

7. Please read the product description and rate on a scale from 1 (being the least) to 10 (being the most) how curious or interested you are in learning more about the following smartphone based on the product description provided.
 - 1 – Not Interested
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
 - 7
 - 8
 - 9
 - 10 – Very Interested
8. Please select the statement that best describes what made you curious or interested in learning more about the product based on the product description. Check all that apply.
 - The description was easy to understand.
 - The description was difficult to understand.
 - The description offered intriguing details.
 - The description made the product seem novel.
 - The description made the product seem familiar.
 - Other: (please describe below)
 - Nothing about the description made me curious or interested in learning more.
9. Please help us understand why you selected the answer/s above:
10. Please select the statement that best describes what made you LESS curious or interested in learning more about the product based on the product description. Check all that apply.
 - The description was too basic.
 - The description was difficult to understand.
 - The description offered irrelevant or unnecessary details.

- The description made the product seem too trendy or new.
- The description did not make the product seem familiar or accessible.
- Other: (please describe below)
- Nothing about the description made me less curious or interested in learning more

11. Please help us understand why you selected the answer/s above:

Section Four

This section is the same exercise as the last two sections but with a different writing style.

Imagine you are interested in purchasing a new smartphone. You are doing some online shopping and comparing your options.





Photo by OOI JJET on Unsplash

Introducing our newest smartphone, the Ibex.
This year's upgrade features a 1080p LCD display, 48 hr battery life, and 6.5 Mbps wireless charging. New 2.0 biometrics technology and fast 128 GB eMMC flash memory. The Ibex is 6.84 oz and comes in ash, brown, or peru.

 [Link](#)

12. Please read the product description and rate on a scale from 1 (being the least) to 10 (being the most) how curious or interested you are in learning more about the following smartphone based on the product description provided.
- 1 – Not Interested
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
 - 7
 - 8
 - 9
 - 10 – Very Interested
13. Please select the statement that best describes what made you curious or interested in learning more about the product based on the product description. Check all that apply.
- The description was easy to understand.
 - The description was difficult to understand.
 - The description offered intriguing details.
 - The description made the product seem novel.

- The description made the product seem familiar.
 - Other: (please describe below)
 - Nothing about the description made me curious or interested in learning more.
14. Please help us understand why you selected the answer/s above:
15. Please select the statement that best describes what made you LESS curious or interested in learning more about the product based on the product description. Check all that apply.
- The description was too basic.
 - The description was difficult to understand.
 - The description offered irrelevant or unnecessary details.
 - The description made the product seem too trendy or new.
 - The description did not make the product seem familiar or accessible.
 - Other: (please describe below)
 - Nothing about the description made me less curious or interested in learning more
16. Please help us understand why you selected the answer/s above:

Section Five

In this final section, please compare all three of the product descriptions together.




<p>Introducing our newest smartphone, the Oryx. This year's upgrade features an extra large touch-screen display, two-day battery life, and wireless charging. New technology makes this phone brighter and faster. The Oryx is lightweight and comes in ecru, cream, or gray.</p> <p> Link</p>	<p>Introducing our newest smartphone, the Gazelle. This year's upgrade features a flawless EagleSharp™ display, all-weekend battery life, and wireless anywhere CrossSection™ charging. Most advanced BioMatic Pro™ technology equals light fast speed. The Gazelle is weightless and comes in black, cream, or tan.</p> <p> Link</p>	<p>Introducing our newest smartphone, the Ibex. This year's upgrade features a 1080p LCD display, 48 hr battery life, and 6.5 Mbps wireless charging. New 2.0 biometrics technology and fast 128 GB eMMC flash memory. The Ibex is 6.84 oz and comes in ash, brown, or peru.</p> <p> Link</p>
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Photo by John Schroder on Unsplash

17. Comparing all three product descriptions together. Please select which product description made you the MOST curious or interested in learning more about the product.
- The Gazelle (the dotted border description)
 - The Oryx (the solid border description)
 - The Ibex (the dashed border description)

18. Comparing all three product descriptions together. Please select which product description made you the LEAST curious or interested in learning more about the product.
 - The Gazelle (the dotted border description)
 - The Oryx (the solid border description)
 - The Ibex (the dashed border description)
19. Is there anything you'd like to add to help us understand your opinions concerning these product descriptions?

Appendix B

Table 1

Results from Product Description Questionnaire

Writing Styles	Adspeak (Gazelle)		Plain language (Oryx)		Jargon (Ibex)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Curiosity/Interest Levels						
Not Interesting	1	7.1	7	50	2	14.3
Neutral	4	28.6	4	28.6	6	42.9
Somewhat Interesting	7	50	3	21.4	4	28.6
Interesting	2	14.3	0	0	2	14.3
Overall Favoritism						
Most Liked	2	14.3	6	42.9	6	42.9
Least Liked	8	57.1	0	0	6	42.9
Reasonings & Responses						
Number of Responses		30		30		35
Positive Responses						
Intriguing details	8	26.7	2	6.7	6	17.1
Easy to understand	2	6.7	15	50	5	14.3
Liked the features	4	13.3	0	0	3	8.6
Seemed familiar	2	6.7	5	16.7	2	5.7
Good description	0	0	3	10	2	5.7
Negative Responses						
Did not seem familiar	4	13.3	0	0	4	11.4
Too basic	2	6.7	3	10	0	0
Not intriguing	2	6.7	2	6.7	2	5.7
Not easy to understand	4	13.3	0	0	9	25.7
Exaggerated claims	2	6.7	0	0	0	0
Unnecessary details	0	0	0	0	2	5.7

Appendix C.1.

Transcript of Interview #1

Recorded on 09/07/2022

Seth Jantz: Is it okay if I record right now?

Participant #1: Yes. That's okay.

SJ: Now, these are the same descriptions you just read. Out of all three, which one makes you the most interested to find out more information about the product?

P1: The Gazelle. It just seems like a good phone.

SJ: Why do you say that? What about the description makes you say that?

P1: I like the wording. It's like they are trying to sell you something.

SJ: You mean you like the persuasive wording?

P1: Yes.

SJ: Okay, now, out of the three, which product description did you not like? Or which one didn't you want to find out more information about?

P1: This one.

SJ: The Ibex? Why didn't you like this one?

P1: It's not persuading me. I mean, I can already see that information on the product itself.

SJ: You mean like on the product packaging.

P1: Yes. What's the point of putting this information here? There's no need to click to find out more information. The information is right here.

SJ: Anything else you didn't like?

P1: The numbers were confusing. It wasn't trying to sell you anything.

SJ: Would you say that you would like to be sold something in a product description?

P1: Yes. Because then I can find out more information about the product if I want to.

Appendix C.2.

Transcript of Interview #2

Recorded on 09/08/2022

Seth Jantz: Is it okay if I record you right now?

Participant #2: Yes.

SJ: I just want to ask you some questions about the questionnaire you just did, if that's okay?

SJ: What did you like about the product description for the Gazelle?

P2: I liked it but didn't rate it the best.

SJ: Okay, what didn't you like about it?

P2: It was a little too nebulous. In other words, it has good battery life. Okay. How much battery life? The colors I didn't like. And not being a techie, a lot of that means nothing to me. I need more specifics.

SJ: Anything else you want to add about that?

P2: I think that's plenty.

SJ: Thinking about the product description for the Ibex, what did you like about that one?

P2: I like it because it provides the phone's specifics and statistics. I mean, the other (Gazelle) was a little too general. It's specific. It tells you what it does, and well, it doesn't ask you to want it does do.

SJ: Is there anything you didn't like about it?

P2: It didn't tell you what it won't do. But I think it does what it's supposed to do. Now you know a lot more detail.

SJ: You think in product descriptions you see online, there should be pros and cons for each product? Would that help you as a consumer?

P2: It couldn't hurt. But you're going to get opinions all over the map. And if it does everything it said it will do, without bullshitting me. If I buy it and I find out that it doesn't do some of the things the specifics say...

SJ: That's an exaggeration.

P2: That's an exaggeration. That's not playing fair. So, there ought to be a fact checker provided by the company to make sure what you're putting out there is a review for, or a specific description is accurate. It's gotta' be accurate otherwise. Well, people nowadays can just say anything.

SJ: You don't want to feel cheated.

P2: You feel cheated, particularly if you spend 800 dollars for the thing.

SJ: Is there anything else you want to add about that?

P2: No.

SJ: What do you think about the product description for the Oryx?

P2: I like that one too. It's not quite as specific as the other one (Ibex). One thing you never mentioned about any of them is the cost.

SJ: That would matter to you?

P2: That would matter to me. It's great if it does everything except cook bread, but I can't afford this mother. If it's 1000 dollars, I'm not going to buy it. I'll buy one that

appears to be to do what I need. That's the other thing. I think the average person is only going to buy a product that fits how they use the phone. If I were a business guy, a construct foreman, or something like that, I need the top-of-the-line Rolls Royce, loaded thing. But a guy like me, I don't need all that.

SJ: So, you think in a product description if there were to label products as occupational products like this is the phone for the businessman. Or this is the phone for the construction worker.

P2: Yeah. Or this would fit a retired person's needs perfectly. This one would be perfect for students.

SJ: So, you think demographics or important to selling?

P2: Yeah. In other words, tailor it to specific markets because one phone does not fit all.

SJ: But that's what they want us to believe so they can sell the maximum of people.

P2: Right, well, they want you to do is to say, "god, I love that feature." And you'll never use it. You bought it because now you can say, "well, this thing takes movies and color, and I can reverse them."

SJ: Okay, now, out of these three that we just read, which one is your favorite one?

P2: Well, like I say, it's the middle one (Ibex).

SJ: Now, which one was you're least favorite?

P2: The one with the least amount of detail (Oryx). Bottom line is that I'm looking for specific details so that I can decide on my particular lifestyle if I want it at that price. Price has got to be included even if it's a range. Like, 250 to 400 hundred. 800 to 1000. Because it's really nice that I like that little phone because it's got all the details, but I think I need it I may not need—all that. But I'm not going to pay 1000 dollars for it, I tell you right now.

SJ: Would you not even require a product description? If it just had the picture and the price.

P2: No. No, no.

SJ: You couldn't buy a product like that?

P2: That's too brief.

SJ: Got to have the details.