A Sociolinguistic Study on Linguistic Deviation in Apple's Advertisement

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Abstract: Apple Inc. is a globally leading company in the electronics and technology industry, whose remarkable success is attributed to the high quality of its products. However, the popularity of any product cannot be achieved without its advertising. Linguistic deviation is a common phenomenon and language strategy in English advertisement. English advertisement, as a means to attract consumers, uses a lot of language deviation, which makes the advertising language novel and unique, and stimulates people's strong desire to make a purchase. This paper adopts a qualitative analysis method and studies six types of linguistic deviations in Apple's advertisement-----phonological, lexical, graphological, grammatical, semantic deviation and deviation of register under the guidance of Leech's language deviation model and further explores the social factors behind these linguistic deviations in Apple's advertisement. The study finds that phonologically, Apple's advertisements frequently employ rhetorical devices such as alliteration, repetition, and consonance to create a harmonious and catchy rhythm. Lexically, the advertisers coin novel terms to communicate the innovative nature of the products. Graphologically, they offer readers a fresh experience by altering the visual form of words, even if it involves intentional misspellings. Semantically, the advertisers excel at utilizing personification and metaphor to bridge the psychological gap between the audience and the products. Finally, at the register level, they introduce unconventional expressions, despite their apparent mismatch with the electronics context, to highlight the uniqueness of Apple's uniqueness.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Linguistic deviation, Leech's model of language deviation, Apple's advertisement.

1. Introduction

With the trend of economic globalization and the acceleration of modernization process, advertisement has developed rapidly and gained increasingly more scholar attention from researchers at home and abroad. Apple Inc. is a globally leading electronics company, and its success is not only attributed to the high quality of its products but also to its unique and innovative promotional strategies, with advertisement playing a crucial role in this regard. The use of language is a process in which language users constantly make language choices. Linguistic deviation is very common in verbal communication. It is not only a special linguistic phenomenon, but also a pragmatic strategy [1]. Linguistic deviation is a commonly used linguistic strategy in advertising language.

Therefore, this paper studies the linguistic deviations in the advertisements on Apple's official website from the perspective of sociolinguistics and explore the social factors behind them. This study endeavors to answer two questions: Firstly, what types of linguistic deviation are used in the advertisement on Apple's official website? Secondly, what are the social factors that contribute to the linguistic deviation in the advertisement on Apple's official website?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Linguistic Deviation

The term "linguistic deviation" was created by Geoffrey Leech when he studied poems in 1969 [2]. From a linguistic point of view, he found a lot of irregularities in the use of language. Deviation, in general, refers to the act of moving from what is generally expected or acceptable—that is, from what is usual or acceptable. Any divergence from the

customary and acceptable standards of language is seen as such in this sense. Accordingly, linguistic deviation is "a case of non-conformity to the norms and regularities of discourse structure" [3]. As Crystal (2003) defined, deviation refers to a sentence or other linguistic unit that deviates from commonly accepted linguistic conventions and seems grammatically, phonologically or even semantically malformed [4]. On the basis of the study on poems, Leech (1969) classifies linguistic deviation into eight types: lexical, semantic, phonological, graphological, historical, dialectal, deviation of register and deviation of historical period [5].

2.2 Previous Studies on Linguistic Deviation in Advertisement

Advertisement, as a marketing tool, is rich in literary and artistic qualities. Linguistic deviation is a common linguistic phenomenon found in advertisements. In recent years, a significant number of scholars have conducted research on the phenomenon of linguistic deviation in advertisement. Xia (1995) believes that advertising practice has proved that the deviation of language can be regarded as the key to surprise success in advertising [6]. Wei (2002) points out that language use is a process in which language users constantly make language choices [7]. Linguistic deviation is very common in language communication. It is not only a special language phenomenon, but also a communicative strategy. Advertising language is the least standard language. Language deviation is one of the main characteristics of advertising language. Lian and Shen (2003) also argue that advertising language has its special style. Linguistic deviation is a prominent phenomenon [8]. The deviation of lexicon, the use of puns and the deviation of grammar make advertisements infinitely charming and advertising relies on its unique linguistic expression to achieve its pragmatic effect. In addition to purely identifying and analyzing the phenomenon of language deviation in advertising, some scholars have also delved into the

promotional effects achieved through linguistic deviations in advertising language. Huang (2019) points out that the linguistic deviations in advertising language can simultaneously satisfy the requirements of both customers and advertisers by analyzing the lexical deviations in modern commercial advertisements. Furthermore, some scholars have proposed the concept of deviation and normalization in advertising language [9]. Liu (2019) analyzes the reasons for the non-conformity of advertising language to Chinese language norms from pragmatic and ethical perspectives through analyzing the phenomenon of linguistic deviations in advertising language. Finally, he argues that advertisers should take feasible measures to promote the standardization of Chinese language in advertising [10]. Similarly, Zheng and Yang (2018) points out that this is a linguistic deviation phenomenon and suggests that advertisers should be guided to adhere to Chinese language norms by analyzing the mixed usage of Chinese words "钜惠" and "巨惠" in advertisements. In addition, the phenomenon of linguistic deviation has been receiving increasing attention in the field of advertising translation [11]. Li and Han (2015) analyzes the causes and countermeasures of linguistic deviation in Chinese-English advertisement translation and points out that translators need to be creative in catering to readers' interests [12]. Yang and Wang (2015) analyzes how advertisements mutate in the translation process from three aspects: lexical deviation, syntactic deviation and semantic deviation under the guidance of Skopos Theory [13].

Currently, there is a relatively rich body of research on language deviation in advertising language. However, studies examining language deviation in advertising and the underlying social factors from a sociolinguistic perspective are relatively scarce. Therefore, this study chooses Apple's official website advertisements as the research object to analyze the language deviations and their expressive effects. Furthermore, it delves into the social factors that give rise to the significant language deviations found in Apple's advertisements.

3. Theoretical Foundation

This study will be conducted under Leech's model of language deviation. According to Leech (1969), linguistic deviation is a necessity to produce an artistic work. Advertising can be regarded as an art of promotion. In advertising, this deviation from the norm is often intentionally employed to create memorable and impactful messages. By analyzing Apple's advertising slogans through Leech's model, this study aims to analyze the strategic use of language deviations and their effectiveness in communicating the brand's values and product features.

Linguistic deviations are categorized into three main levels of language, namely realization, form, and semantics. Leech's model provides a comprehensive framework to identify and analyze linguistic deviations in various types of text, including advertisement. Leech's model of linguistic deviations comprises eight distinct types of deviations that are classified into phonological, lexical, grammatical, graphological, semantic, dialectical, deviation of register, and deviation of historical period. This study mainly analyzes the phonological, lexical, grammatical, graphological, semantic deviation and deviation of register based on the date collected.

4. Methodology

This paper adopts the text analysis method. The data for this paper is made up of advertisement of Apple 13, Apple 14 and Apple 15 series products on Apple's official website. The study focuses on the linguistic deviation in the advertisement. Typically, advertisers usually pay more attention to the slogans or headlines which will make the audience show interest in their products. Therefore, in this paper, what to be discussed is mainly the headlines and slogans of the Apple products while the detailed description or the illustration will not be involved in this paper. Considering that the conclusion will be drawn in the aftermath of the analysis of the data, the data collection will be a qualitative one instead of a quantitative one.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Classification of Linguistic Deviation in Apple's Advertisement

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Leech's model of linguistic deviations comprises eight distinct types of deviations that are classified into phonological, lexical, grammatical, graphological, semantic, dialectical, deviation of register, and deviation of historical period. An analysis of advertisements for Apple's products revealed six types of linguistic deviation in them. Therefore, what follows is the analysis of the linguistic deviation of Apple's advertisements in six dimensions: phonology, lexicon, graphology, grammar, semantics, and register.

5.1.1 Phonological Deviation

Hayakawa (1978) points out that advertisers must use all possible linguistic means, including the extensive use of rhyme to leave readers a deep impression [14]. In order to enhance the persuasiveness and emotional effect of advertisements, advertisers need to pay great attention to phonetic rhythm of the advertisement. Advertisers often aim to create a memorable and engaging experience for their target audience through the careful manipulation of sound and language. By harnessing the power of phonetic rhythm, they can evoke specific emotions, create a unique brand identity, and establish a strong connection with consumers. Advertisers frequently employ rhetorical devices such as alliteration, rhyme, and repetition to enhance the readability of their advertisements.

Example 1: watchOS 10 Reimagined. Remarkable. (iWatch series 9)

Alliteration is a rhetorical device that involves the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of adjacent words. This linguistic technique creates a pleasant and catchy flow, making the advertisement more memorable. In the example above, the rhyme "re" is employed, thus enabling the advertisements to be catchier and easier to remember.

Example 2:

Faster downloads. Faster streaming. Faster gaming. (iPhone SE)

Example 3:

So strong. So light. So Pro. (iPhone 15pro)

Repetition is another common technique used in advertisements to emphasize key messages and create a strong impact on the audience. By repeating certain words or phrases, advertisers can create a sense of familiarity and familiarity, more memorable. making the message Apple's advertisements often repeat key adjectives or descriptive phrases to create a rhythmic flow and emphasize the product's attributes. In the case of the iPhone SE, the repetition of "Faster" for three times underscores the phone's speed and performance capabilities. Similarly, in the iPhone 15 Pro advertisement, the repetition of "So" in "So strong. So light. So Pro." underscores the phone's durability, portability, and professional-grade features.

Example 4:

Sharper, smarter, snappier selfies. (iPhone 14)

Example 5:

Smarter. Brighter. Mightier. (iWatch series 9)

Example 6:

Charging as easy as USB-C. (iPhone 15)

In advertisements, the phonological deviation is commonly when advertisers deliberately alter employed the pronunciation of a word at the end of a line to fulfill the need for rhyme. This technique is utilized to arrange sound patterns in a more harmonious and memorable manner, ultimately achieving the desired communicative effect intended by the advertiser. In the two examples above, Notice the italicized words which vary in their pronunciation, yet they are deviantly used to create a rhyming harmony. The advertiser has utilized phonological deviation to create catchy and memorable slogans. In the case of the iPhone 14, the repetition of "-er" in "Sharper, smarter, snappier" creates a rhythmic pattern that is both ear-catching and reinforces the phone's advanced capabilities. Likewise, in example (5), the repetition of "-ter" and "-tier" sounds in "Smarter. Brighter. Mightier." creates a similar effect, emphasizing the watch's superior intelligence, brightness, and power. In example (6), the advertiser cleverly divided this sentence "Charging as easy as USB-C" into two lines, achieving the rhyme of "sy" and "C".

Based on the analysis above, it can be observed that phonological deviation not only enhances the readability and memorability of the advertisements but also helps to create a strong emotional connection with the audience. By employing this technique, advertisers are able to effectively communicate their product's key features and benefits in a way that is both engaging and impactful. This, in turn, increases the chances of consumers remembering the brand or product and potentially leading to increased sales and brand recognition.

5.1.2 Lexical Deviation

Lexical deviation encompasses the utilization of vocabulary and the meanings ascribed to words. For instance, the employment of uncommon vocabulary or the non-standard usage of words. Leech (1969) delves into neologism, referring to the invention of novel words or expressions that are yet to gain widespread usage within a language. According to Leech (1969), neologism, being the creation of novel words, constitutes a transgression of prevailing lexical regulations. However, neologism can alternatively be perceived as an extension of word formation rules, where existing rules are applied in a broader context. In essence, neologism involves the utilization of an established word as a foundation for the generation of a new one. A prevalent approach in word formation is affixation, which entails the addition of prefixes or suffixes to pre-existing words. Hence, neologism emerges as a natural and inventive facet of linguistic usage, particularly prevalent among advertisers who strive to captivate public attention through creativity. Abundant examples of lexical deviation can be observed in Apple's product advertisements.

Example 7:

A phoneful of fun. (iPhone 13pro)

In this example, the word "phoneful" is a neologism created by affixation, specifically by adding the suffix "-ful" to the existing word "phone". This neologism is used to describe the iPhone 13 Pro as a phone that is full of fun and entertainment features.

Example 8:

Pro-level camera. Whoa-level pics. (iPhone 14)

In order to match the "x+-level" pattern, a word "whoa-level" was coined. Here, the word "Whoa" is used as a prefix, imitating the structure of "Pro-level" to convey the idea of something extraordinary or stunning. This neologism is employed to emphasize the high-quality camera capabilities of the iPhone 14, suggesting that it can capture photos that are exceptional and worthy of amazement.

Example 9:

A camera in a class by itselfie. (iPhone 14pro)

In example (9), the word "itselife" is also a coined word, demonstrating another instance of neologism in Apple's advertisement. The word "itselfie" is a combination of "itself" and "selfie", intended to convey the idea that the iPhone 14 Pro's camera stands alone in its class, offering an unparalleled photography experience of taking a selfie.

In summary, in Apple's advertisements, lexical deviation is a key linguistic device employed by advertisers to create impactful and memorable messages. By coining novel words like "phoneful", "itselfie" and "whoa-level", advertisers like Apple are able to communicate their products' unique selling points in a creative and engaging manner, which not only captures the audience's attention but also align with the

advertising strategy of emphasizing product features and benefits.

5.1.3 Grammatical Deviation

Grammatical deviation refers to the violation of grammatical rules, which is ungrammatical structure or the repeated use of conventional grammatical forms to an unconventional degree [15]. A prominent feature of English advertising language is the extensive use of elliptical sentences, which makes the language concise and eye-catching and prominent [16]. Apple's advertisement is no exception.

Example 10:

Think huge. (iMac)

With the popularity of TV and the Internet, the pace of people's life is accelerating, the cost of advertising is increasing, the trend of miniaturization of English advertising is becoming increasingly obvious, and the advertisement must be concise and eye-catching, so there are more short and concise simple sentences. Apple's advertisement feature a significant presence of imperative sentences and simple sentences. In example (10), "Think huge" is imperative. However, this sentence does not follow the grammatical rule for the reason that "huge" can not directly modify the verb "think" in a standard grammatical sense. "Think huge" conveys a figurative meaning. It is an elliptical imperative sentence, meaning it is incomplete but understood to imply a full command or suggestion. In this case, it is understood to mean "Think in a big way" or "Imagine on a grand scale." Thus, although this slogan deviates from traditional grammar rules, but leaves readers with great imagination.

Example 11:

Watches out for your heart. (iWatch series 9)

Additionally, in this example, the verb "watches" is indeed inappropriate in the context of an imperative sentence, as it lacks a subject and does not follow the grammatical structure of a standard imperative. However, the word "watch" here not only functions as a verb, more importantly, it stands for the product iWatch. This kind of grammatical deviation does not hinder readers' comprehension, but rather enhances their understanding of the iWatch's functionality. Moreover, the phrase "Watches out for your heart" is effectively employed as a metaphorical expression. It does not literally mean that the iWatch series 9 has eyes or is capable of literal surveillance, but rather it figuratively illustrates the device's ability to monitor and protect the wearer's heart health. This is a common advertising strategy, whereby brands utilize nonliteral language to evoke emotional responses and create a stronger emotional connection with the consumer.

5.1.4 Graphological Deviation

Altering the form of words, phrases, and even entire texts is an effective strategy for advertisements to capture readers' attention, as it highlights the focal points of the promotion. Consequently, graphological deviation is frequently employed in advertising as a means to draw the audience's gaze and emphasize key messages. By manipulating the visual appearance of language, advertisers can create unique and memorable visual identities that resonate with their target audience. There is no lack of this type of linguistic deviation in the slogan of Apple products.

Example 12:

The looongest battery life of any iPhone. Ever. (iPhone 14)

Graphology, or the visual appearance of language, plays a crucial role in advertising as it can attract attention, create a unique identity, and communicate a brand's message in a memorable way. By adding two extra "o" s to the word "long", the advertiser is utilizing a form of typographical play that breaks from the norm. This deviation in graphology catches the eye of the reader, drawing attention to the claim of "the looongest battery life of any iPhone. Ever." It creates a visual impact that is difficult to ignore, making the message more memorable. The choice of this particular misspelling is also strategic. It maintains the phonetic similarity to the original word "long", ensuring that the message is still understood, while adding a playful and informal touch. This informality can help establish a connection with the target audience, making the brand more relatable and approachable. Additionally, the use of "Ever" at the end of the sentence further emphasizes the claim, suggesting that not only is iPhone 14's battery life the longest among all iPhones, but it's also unprecedented in the history of the iPhone.

In summary, the misspelling of "longest" as "looongest" in this advertisement is a deliberate graphological deviation that serves to attract attention, communicate a unique selling point, and create a memorable message. It is a clever way to differentiate the iPhone 14 from its competitors and establish a strong brand identity.

5.1.5 Semantic Deviation

"Semantic deviation is a relative, not absolute, concept, depending on context and on the presence of collocates or other co-occurring words that supply the 'norm' to which a particular word or collocation is a deviation." (Leech, 1969:48) There are many rhetorical devices in advertisements, such as puns, exaggeration, analogy, personification etc.

Example 13:

iPhone went to film school, so you don't have to. (iPhone 13)

Example 14:

In an emergency, iPhone has your back. (iPhone 15pro)

Personification, as a common rhetoric device commonly used in advertising language, is employed to ascribe human characteristics and behaviors to non-human objects. In example (13), "iPhone went to film school, so you don't have to", iPhone is personified by suggesting that it has an educational experience, which is attending film school, thereby imparting a sense of intelligence, capability, and even a desire to learn and improve. The personification creates an emotional connection with the consumer, who may feel that by purchasing this iPhone, they are gaining access to a sophisticated and well-trained device. In example (14), "In an

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emergency, iPhone has your back", the iPhone is again personified, this time with a sense of loyalty and support. By saying that the iPhone "has your back", the advertiser is implying that the phone will always be there for the user in times of need, just like a trusted friend or family member. This personification not only makes the product more appealing but also instills a sense of trust and security in the consumer.

In general, Apple's advertisers create an advertising context and employ rhetorical devices to rationalize potentially ambiguous sentences, ultimately achieving effective advertising outcomes.

5.1.6 Deviation of Register

Deviation of register refers to the borrowing of expression and language forms in one register that are unique to other registers [17]. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define that register is composed of linguistic features associated with various situational features, especially the meaning of reference fields, tenor, and modes [18]. The use of language must match the environment in which it is used, and one's style of language must conform to the communicative situation, which is the basic rule of language use. Advertising language, however, frequently uses out-of-context language to create a sense of contrast and thus attract readers' attention.

Example 15:

Lost and precisely found. (iWatch series 9)

"Lost-and-found" originally means a place in a public building where things that people have lost are stored. However, this expression is used as an advertisement with an added word "precisely" to convey to the readers that iWatch is capable of finding exactly where the iPhone is located. In this way, the advertisement serves the purpose of promoting both the iWatch and the iPhone at the same time.

Example 16:

Focus-pocus. (iPhone 15)

Example 17:

Presto chango. (iPhone 15)

"Focus-pocus" is adapted from the expression "Hocus-pocus", which refers to trickery of some kind and it is a name commonly adopted by a juggler or magician. The advertiser changes the word "hocus" into "focus" to show that the camera of an iPhone is as magical as a magic trick. Similarly, "presto chango" is a word used by magicians when they perform tricks. These expressions, which are not descriptive of electronic products, are quoted or adapted to fit the context in which Apple products are being promoted.

5.2 Social Factors Behind Linguistic Deviation in Apple's Advertisement

The change and development of language is determined by the development of society, and its change can also reflect the change of society. The social factors that cause linguistic deviation are comprehensive and multifaceted. This section will discuss the social factors behind linguistic deviation in Apple's advertisement from the following aspects:

5.2.1 Consumer

According to CIRP's (Consumer Intelligence Research Partners) report on the age of Apple customers in 2023, about half of Apple device owners are under 45 years old. This segment of the population typically possesses a certain economic foundation and purchasing power, while also pursuing fashionable and cutting-edge technological products. In terms of occupation and social strata, consumers Apple products are primarily concentrated in the upper-middle and high-end brackets. These consumers typically enjoy higher income and purchasing power, thus demanding superior quality and functionality from their smartphones. The geographic distribution of Apple product consumers also exhibits a pattern. According to various market research reports, consumers in large cities such as New York, London, Tokyo, and Shanghai tend to be more prevalent in the Apple ecosystem. This can be attributed to several factors, including the high economic activity and technological savvy of these urban centers, as well as the dense population and strong consumer base. Moreover, the presence of Apple's retail stores and a robust distribution network in these cities further enhances the accessibility and appeal of its products. Consumers in these regions often associate Apple products with innovation, reliability, and status, making them a popular choice among the affluent urban population.

In conclusion, the consumer base of Apple products is primarily composed of young and affluent individuals with strong brand loyalty and a penchant for innovative technology. They are concentrated in large cities and value the integrated ecosystem of Apple products and services. Understanding the characteristics of their consumers is crucial for marketers and advertisers to effectively target and engage this lucrative segment of the market. Thus, advertisers tend to employ innovative language in their advertisements to cater to their target consumers.

5.2.2 Internet Scene

This paper explores the advertisement on Apple's official website, indicating that the advertisement are placed within the scene of the internet world. Although the internet world differs from our real-world environment, it still belongs to a social scene. As Wang (2016) said, the Internet culture has particularity, that is, openness and inclusiveness, which makes the words used on the Internet more arbitrary. In addition, the readability of words on screen is statistically 25% worse than on paper [19]. When reading a text on the internet, an internet user is more prone to distractions compared to reading a printed text, as their reading or writing process on the internet is frequently interrupted by various other activities. Consequently, as Fiorentino & Giulianawriting (2007) claimed, reading on the web tends to become more fragmented [20]. Due to the presence of these factors, internet users are likely to reduce constraints on text, significantly lowering the requirements for rigorous text organization and grammar. Hence, Apple's advertisements, primarily presented in the scene of the internet, must achieve linguistic deviation through various means to enhance their readability and thereby strengthen the promotional effect of their advertising language.

5.2.3 Social Psychology

The advertising process is a process of aesthetic consumption, as well as a process of creation, formation and feeling of beauty. The aesthetic pleasure it brings to the audience is usually holistic and comprehensive [21]. The readers' evaluation of advertising works is abstract and general, and it has to rely on the aesthetics of advertisement to achieve the purpose of promoting advertising products or services, so the advertising works bring aesthetic pleasure to the audience and make the audience psychologically identify with the advertising information. Apple's advertisement employ numerous linguistic strategies to impart beauty in terms of phonology, semantics, and visuals, which aptly caters to the contemporary consumers' aesthetic preferences. This, in turn, leads readers to psychologically identify with the product information conveyed through the slogans while appreciating their aesthetic value.

5.2.4 Social Environment

The existence of various linguistic deviations in advertising language can be attributed to the changes in the social environment. Since the era of economic globalization begun, the interaction and collision between different cultures have made cultures increasingly diverse and vibrant, and social diversity has also led to greater linguistic diversity. Advertisements that are excessively formal and grammatically correct no longer satisfy the diverse preferences of modern individuals. Apple, as a leading electronics company worldwide, not only innovates in product development but also does not adhere strictly to linguistic norms in its advertisement allows it to achieve its promotional objectives effectively.

6. Conclusion

To inform prospective customers of the availability of their goods and services. advertisers employ language in an attempt to convince the customer to make a purchase. The language used in advertisements is appropriate for the purpose of informing, luring, thrilling, and persuading the costumers to make a purchase. Advertiser credibility hinges on how well he chooses to convey his message. The advertisers need to use creative, unique, and innovative language to accomplish their goals. Thus, it is acceptable for advertisement to be innovative and new in order to grab public attention, win their trust, and influence their opinions. Apple Inc. is a globally leading electronics company, and its success is not only attributed to the high quality of its products but also to its unique and innovative promotional strategies, with advertising playing a crucial role in this regard. Through the analysis of collected advertisements from Apple's official website conducted in this study, the study finds that there exists a significant amount of linguistic deviations in the advertisements. Phonologically, the rhetoric devices including alliteration, repetition and consonance are frequently used to create a rhyming harmony. At the lexical level, some new words are coined to convey the message of the creativity of the products. At the graphological level, Apple's advertisers bring a new experience to readers by changing the form the words even if there are mistakes in spelling. At the grammatical level, Apple's advertisements often employ simple sentences and imperatives, and do not always adhere to traditional grammatical rules. At the semantic level, Apple's advertisers excels at using personification and metaphor to reduce the psychological distance between readers and its products. At the register level, a lot of expressions that do not fit the context of electronics are utilized to describe the uniqueness of Apple products. Furthermore, this paper explores the reasons for the emergence of these linguistic deviations in Apple's advertisement and finds that factors including consumers, internet scene, social psychology, and social environment have all contributed to the presence of significant linguistic deviation in Apple's advertisement.

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