

Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth: A Dangerous Mix



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FORMULA FOR GETTING KIDS HOOKED

START WITH
SUGARY SOFT DRINKS



ADD CAFFIENE
ENERGY DRINKS



ADD ALCOHOL
ALCOHOLIC ENERGY DRINKS

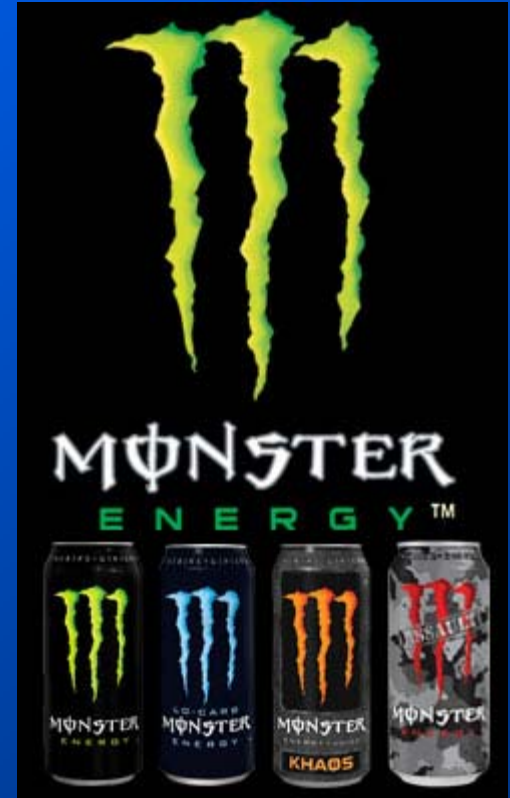


Three-point-plan for targeting youth

- 1) create brand confusion with nonalcoholic versions
- 2) provide a cheap alternative to mixing energy drinks with alcohol
- 3) deploy youth-friendly grassroots and viral marketing

Exploding Popularity of Energy Drinks

- 500 new energy drink products introduced worldwide in 2006
- Energy drink sales = \$3.2 billion
- 31 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds are regular consumers v. 22 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds



-- Mintel Group

The Energy Drink Market: Youth Driven



- One in three teens use energy drinks compared to one in ten adults.
- Youth consumption is rapidly increasing.
- Energy drinks help teens augment their rebellious image—legally.

Brand Confusion Which Contain Alcohol?



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Rockstar Brand Confusion

“This new line of alcoholic beverage product is extremely similar in look and feel to the popular energy drinks that contain no alcohol. Our youth are at risk when clerks and retailers cannot differentiate between nonalcoholic and alcoholic beverages being sold.”



-- Chris Lilly, Kentucky Alcoholic Beverage Control
(May 2007)

Only non-alcoholic brands have nutrition facts and ingredients listed



Who Owns These Brands?



Miller
Brewing
Company

Anheuser-Busch

Who distributes this drink?



Who makes this drink?



Anheuser-Busch

Alcohol Brands Cost Less

Price Comparison—Three alcoholic brands cost about 25 percent less than three nonalcoholic brands.²⁹

Alcoholic Brands

■ Rockstar 21	\$1.59
■ Sparks	\$1.53
■ Tilt	\$1.53

Nonalcoholic Brands

■ Rockstar Juiced	\$2.03
■ Lost Energy	\$2.07
■ SoBe Adrenaline Rush	\$2.03



Viral Marketing

“We spent a significant amount of budget on Internet-related activities. We invited consumers to comment on the Web site and post comments without editing them, creating a community of Sparks users who shared ideas and experiences.”

- Minott Wessinger, inventor of Sparks

Sparks on MySpace

Sparks Pals Chat Group

“we all know that sparks is the .1 alcohol + energy hybrid drink of all time, now we have a group to share this knowledge. about time!”



Sparks on Facebook Chat Groups



- Drink Sparks Die Young
- Sparks Addicts Anonymous
- Sparks baby!
- I drink Sparks every day of my life
- Sparks energizes Bermuda

Viral Marketing – Facebook Postings by High Schoolers



“im only 18 and i had a six pack of sparks in my room and my mom found it, but she had no idea and thought they were jus energy drinks.”

“i dont remember what life was life before sparks but now i really cant remember with it.”

Sex Always Sells

Liquid Charge Girls

www.liquidcharge.com





Public Health Implications

- Marketing and product design promotes youth consumption
- Alcohol + Caffeine = “Wide awake drunk”
- Caffeine masks alcohol’s intoxicating effects, promotes risk taking
- Youth most likely to take risks

Wake Forest / NC Study

Survey of > 4,000 North Carolina college students on mixing alcohol with energy drinks

- 24% of drinkers mixed with energy drinks
- Twice as many episodes of weekly drunkenness
- Drank more – 5.8 v. 4.5 drinks / session
- Greatest number of drinks in a session was 36% higher – 8.3 v. 6.1 drinks

Wake Forest / NC Study

Students who consumed alcohol with energy drinks were twice as likely to:

- be hurt or injured
- require medical attention
- ride with an intoxicated driver
- be taken advantage of sexually
- take advantage of someone else sexually

Wake Forest / NC Study

Authors conclusions

- Mixing caffeine (a stimulant) with alcohol (a depressant), is like getting into a car and stepping on the gas pedal and the brake at the same time.
- Only the symptoms of drunkenness are reduced – but not the drunkenness. Students can't tell if they're drunk or if someone else is drunk. So they get hurt, or they hurt someone else.

Researcher: Mary Claire O'Brien, MD

Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, NC

What Can Be Done?

- **Educate others – use this PP and report**
- **State-wide bans on pre-mixed products**
- **Local bans, products, mixing in bars**
- **College campuses – ban free distribution of energy drinks and other marketing**
- **Contact state AGs, other officials**
- **Pressure on corporations: Miller, A-B
Rockstar 21 – no longer in CA and OR**
- **Tax alcopops as spirits, not beer – 26 states**

Download full report, PP:
www.marininstitute.org

Help with taking action:

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