

ENERGY SHOWDOWN

by Mazikeen (“Maze”) Larson

Energy drinks remain a popular beverage among tired teenagers and adults alike, especially around the A. B. Miller campus. Whether its for the flavor or the energy boost, many campus-goers remain loyal to a specific brand.

Seniors are often returning customers—attempting to cope with busy schedules and future worries. Sometimes they have remained loyal to a particular energy drink brand since freshman year or before that, even. Thus, teens are often a targeted audience for brand marketing and advertising.

Many teens admit to being fully aware of possible side effects of the heavy caffeine consumption that energy drinks impose, but often shrug it off. A desensitization could be to blame, but a conscious choice is easily just as blameworthy. However, with companies sinking a large chunks of their advertising budgets into social media-based advertising, a sense of trust—between consumer and brand—could be built through artful advertising tactics and a positive brand image.



In fact, senior Khristhofer Garcia drinks *Monster* religiously, regarding it as his “morning coffee”. He has a particular affinity for the *Monster Energy Ultra*-line of drinks because “it has a better taste than some of the energy drinks I’ve tasted, and gives me enough energy for me to get through the day.”

Destiny Martinez

(12) prefers *Monster* as well. Her reasoning comes down to cost and flavor, which she claims to be both cheaper and better tasting than the competitors. This casual energy drinker mentions that the favorable advertising also leads her to prefer it over other brands, and says, “I usually drink a *Monster* every time I get a chance to go to a store or liquor market.”



Edgar Herrera, a busy senior, finds himself drinking *Redbull*, “max about two times a week just for an energy boost or sometime during the week when I have a lack of sleep.” He considers the “wide variety of flavors” to be one of the brand’s biggest selling points.

“The side effects are indeed very bad and in my opinion I should not be drinking it at all,” Herrera concedes.

Are Energy Drinks

by Gabriel Gutierrez and Mazikeen (“Maze”) Larson

Energy drinks are abundant on A.B. Miller’s campus. We all know someone who skips lunch in favor of a can of *Monster* or *Rockstar*; and we know it is not the healthiest habit—but just how damaging is it really?

A 2018 report found that more than 40% of American teenagers consume energy drinks on a regular basis. I am sure this is a number that is easy to rationalize for most teens: a can just before a midnight *Valorant* match, another in the morning for breakfast, and maybe one last can afterschool, just to recharge. It has become a normalized part of a teenager’s diet. Although, the fact that it is teenagers drinking these brands, and the brands that teenagers choose, are not due to random chance.

When was the last time you saw a friend drinking a *Redbull*? When was the last time you saw someone drinking a *Bang*? *Bang* has become the top growing energy drink in America, thanks to their unique marketing practices, which focus on internet-based advertising. Social media platforms deliver spoonfuls of content into waiting mouths of users around the world, perhaps one of today’s greatest advertising tools to reach a variety of audiences. It is, of course, no surprise that companies would seek to get the biggest bang for their buck even if the ways they go about doing that are questionable at best.

“My preferred energy drink is *Rockstar*,” comments Rogelio Mendoza (12). Trying a variety of different energy drinks before settling on *Rockstar*, he “had tried *Monster* and didn’t enjoy it”, then “had *Bang*, which was good, but it tasted too sweet with its flavors”, before a friend finally, “gave me a *Rockstar*; it had enough caffeine to wake me up in the morning with a nice flavor to help me finish it.” Usually consuming two a week (on rare occasions, five), “I don’t drink them as often as most people,” Mendoza remarks, “it’s mostly to get me through the morning.”



Interestingly enough, he does not claim that *Rockstar* is necessarily superior to other energy drinks, but remains his personal go-to for

its balance of caffeine and flavor. His main concern about consuming energy drinks is the eventual caffeine addiction, which he has taken note of, “because I have been drinking more of it lately.” Being conscious of one’s own health is important and the senior admits that if “[he] notice[s] any medical side effects [he]’ll stop.”

It was interesting to see the differences in not only drink preference, but other factors—drink consumption and flavor—as well. Drink consumption: what is an appropriate or safe amount of energy drink consumption? Some students would say once in awhile; maybe once or twice a week; perhaps even every morning.

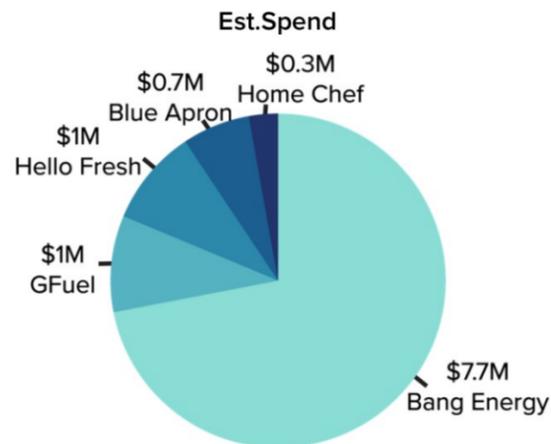
Flavor: is taste the most important factor in choosing an energy drink? Most say yes, some would argue that the energy boost is the most crucial aspect of an energy drink.

Are energy drinks worth the risk? This becomes a point of contention. Some say yes, citing the risks in many other things; others remain neutral, assuring that if they experience adverse effects then they would stop; still others say no, yet continue to consume the caffeine-fueled beverages.



According to a survey done by Neoreach, *Bang Energy* has dedicated much of its marketing budget to YouTube sponsorships. A total of \$7.7 million dollars, seven times as much as the next highest spender. These sponsorships are done with specific channels that *Bang* thinks can best reach its target audience: YouTubers like Disney Docket or Riceman—one a Disney toy unboxing channel, the other a prank You Tuber. In fact, most of *Bang*’s influencer partnerships are with content creators that have overwhelmingly young audiences. Their top sponsored content creator, DangMattSmith, was featured in Nickelodeon back-to-school shorts. *Bang* makes these sponsorships long-term to increase perceived loyalty between the influencer and the brand, one which is hoped to increase the effectiveness of the sponsorships on viewers. In other words, make kids more likely to buy *Bang* drinks because their favorite YouTuber recommended it several times. *Bang* makes no effort to disguise its attempts at marketing to easily influenced children and teens.

This is happening as health professionals and researchers warn about the harmful effects of energy drinks on underage consumers. A questionnaire filled out by teens ages 13-19 using emergency department services (for any reason) and published by Pediatric Emergency Care revealed that 40% reported an adverse effect while ingesting energy drinks. The most common side effects were, in order: insomnia, feeling



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