

Red Bull Case Study  
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“Red Bull gives you wings.” a popular tagline associated with this energy drink, delivering a strong promise to consumers. It answers the question – why. Why purchase my product or invest in my service? For Red Bull, the proposition is – buy our beverage and you will be invincible.

According to the NCCIH National Center for Complementary Integrative Health “Men between the ages of 18 and 34 years consume the most energy drinks, and almost one-third of teens between 12 and 17 years drink them regularly (Energy Drinks).” Competitors like Monster Energy, and Rockstar Energy cannot quite compare to the unique brand and sleek style and size of the Red Bull can. Monster and Rockstar instead sell their products in a larger sized container. Red Bull’s sampling campaigns sets it apart from competitors Monster and Rockstar by offering trial size portions of their products at company sponsored events. In comparison Rockstar and Monster have limiting target audiences. Rockstar particularly positions their products to men as the company features young attractive thin and scanty dressed women models also prominently displayed on their website. Comparatively, Red Bull has a more generic approach and reaches a broader audience.

Red Bull’s target audience can be segmented into four distinct categories – athletic, young, health conscious and young men. The athletic consumer exercises frequently, at the gym, participates in a sport and needs the extra energy and push to rep it out. Red Bull advertises their products at gyms and sporting events to entice this athletic consumer who can conveniently stash away a can in their sports bag.

Young consumers are the next target segment. Students and young adults ages 18-35 either single or married are busy and need the energy boost while preparing for exams, working two jobs, writing papers and on their way to an interview. Red Bull offers that boost in trendy flavors like berry, lime and cranberry that appeal to the hip youngster vibe. Their products are conveniently distributed in refrigerators on college campuses and supermarkets for young people often on the go.

Calories and ingredients matter for the health-conscious consumer. They want an energy boost that fits into their daily calorie count and full of flavor. The berry, lime and cranberry reinforce the assurance of a daily fruit intake and Red Bull's sugar free drink, B-complex vitamins, caffeine and other natural ingredients clearly displayed on the cans assures that the health-conscious consumer can have their energy boost beverage and stay skinny too.

Red Bull's final target audience is young men because of their marketing efforts at sporting events, highway rest areas for tired drivers, extreme motor sports, mountain biking and the infamous annual Flugtag event where participants launched their flying device off a Red Bull branded contraption. These all appeal to particularly young men ages 18-35 years old – an audience who is either married or single, student or working adult and enjoys action, danger, sports, games and a dip into the wild side.

Promotion campaigns and channels vary across the three brands – Red Bull, Monster and Rockstar. Currently, Monster is running a campaign to “Win a Custom Painted Juice Monster Car (Drink to Win).” Customers can enter their name and contact information to be entered for a chance to win the prize. Currently, Red Bull is not running a particular promotion however heavily use event marketing and videos of athletes to further drive their messaging of extreme energy.

Popular drinks Coca-Cola, Monster and Pepsi now have market share with energy boosting ingredients. Coca-Cola launched an energy drink in 2019 (Taylor, Kate). Monster energy products are featured in Halo, an Xbox shooter video game, and their website mentions “...athletes, musicians, anarchists, co-ed’s, road warriors, metal heads, geeks, hipsters, and bikers you’ll dig it too (monsterenergy.com).” According to demographic results posted by a blogger on fandom.com, most Halo gamers are 14-21 years old males (T3CHNOCIDE). Monster is limiting their target audience to this age bracket.

Pepsi recently purchased Rockstar energy drink, reaching for greater market share of in competition with Red Bull. Both Pepsi and Coca Cola battle for share as consumers are ditching soda for alternative energy boosting beverages (Booker, Brakkton). However, consumers are most acquainted with these brands for soda refreshments opposed to an energy or sports drink. Red Bull remains a leader in the energy drink game.

The strength of Red Bull is their generic brand messaging suitable for various segments. Their states, “Red Bull Energy Drink is appreciated worldwide by top athletes, busy professionals, college students and travelers on long journeys (redbull.com).” The strategic placement of Red Bull at a variety of locations including convenience stores, supermarkets sporting events and gyms reach a wider audience. Coca-Cola and Pepsi brands do not particularly market to health conscious and athletic audiences as precisely as Red Bull.

Sponsorships acquired by Red Bull include prominent athletes -- U.S. Baseball Player Kris Bryant, Terry Adams BMX and Blake Griffins pro basketball players among others. This engagement through influencer marketing entices purchases of their products. In addition, they sponsor prominent athletes of extreme sports like motorbike stunt riding, rally raid and wing suit flying, thereby endorsing recklessness.

The unwritten message here is – drink Red Bull and you’ll be able to be an ultra-athlete. A fine line exists between novelty and risk if the brand messaging fails to warn consumers about intake and frequency. Dangers do exist for caffeine overdose. A simple disclosure on packaging and cans can help properly educate and advise consumers.

Research on harmful effects of energy drinks have been indicated for example according to the NCCIH many mix energy drinks with alcohol and marijuana resulting in drunk driving and injuries (Energy Drinks). Currently, Red Bull messaging is positioned toward extreme sports and athletic young people and perpetuates recklessness. Modifications to their messaging including commercials and advertisements of consumers drinking responsibly and solely for the purpose of an energy boost as well as disclaimers on packaging and cans about mixing with other drinks can be helpful and prevent overdose and consumers irresponsible drinking behaviors.

While Red Bull has a greater market share than its competitors, other energy beverages use varying promotional campaigns and messaging to position their brand to consumers, and while classic drinks like Coca-Cola and Pepsi are pushing for market share, nothing quite compares to Red Bull. Any company that wants a piece of the glory while energy drink sales are on the rise, need the right promotional mix and messaging to get in the game.

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