

A Note on Names for Energy Drink Brands and Products

FRANK NUESSEL

University of Louisville, USA

This note examines selectively the names and language associated with popular energy drinks. It defines energy drink, provides a brief history of these products, describes their characteristics, and discusses the names and language used in the marketing of such products. It includes a table of the most popular beverages lists the products by brand and name.

KEYWORDS advertising, brand names, language, marketing, target audience

Introduction

The purpose of this note is fourfold: (1) to define and describe the notion of energy drink; (2) to provide a succinct history of this type of product; (3) to describes its features; and (4) to discuss language (especially nomenclature) associated with it.

An energy drink may be defined as a soft drink that contains various additives intended to provide an individual with additional vitality and alertness through the inclusion of such ingredients as caffeine, vitamins, and herbs. Among the ingredients that may be found in such drinks in various concentrations are caffeine, vitamins, taurine, methylxanthines such as caffeine, vitamin B, herbs, guarana, acai, taurine, various forms of ginseng, maltodextrin, carbonated water, inositol, carnitine, creatine, glucuronolactone, ginkgo biloba, sodium, carbohydrates, various artificial flavors, and some juices. To be sure, not all of these drinks contain all of these ingredients, though some have caffeine, sugar, taurine, and sodium in large amounts.

Although the names of the products listed in this note are not exhaustive, the names of most are included. The appendix at the end of this note contains an extensive listing of many of these products. Since existing beverage companies continue to add new products to their existing line and new companies introduce new energy drinks, a complete listing is elusive.

It should be noted that many convenience stores in the US feature large, colorful cardboard displays with energy drinks prominently positioned at the checkout counter so that the customer will see these products. This positioning is intended to promote impulse purchases. The burgeoning energy drink business has revenue that now exceeds two billion dollars per year. Many of these drinks now have visually

appealing web sites, some with sound effects. Many of these beverages have advertising ties with competitive sports such as car racing, for example, *NOS Energy Drink*® (<http://www.drinknos.com/>), and professional fighting (Ultimate Fighting Championship; <http://xyience.com/>).

Historical note

Wikipedia (Energy Drink: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy_drink) provides a useful resource for a succinct historical overview of energy drinks. Precursors of contemporary energy drinks include a Scottish beverage named *Irn Bru*®, and subsequently produced as *Iron Brew*® in 1901. This early twentieth-century beverage reflects the more recent trend toward quasi-phonetic product spellings. In the 1960s the Japanese drink named *Lipovitan*® was also made available under the brand names *Libogen*® and *Livita*®. In the United Kingdom, the energy drink *Lucozade Energy*® was marketed in 1929. In the US, energy drinks include the now famous *Gatorade*® developed at the University of Florida in 1965. The drink was named after the football team mascot the Gators (Alligators). This drink has enjoyed national and international success, and it is the drink of many professional sports teams. It is a product of *Quaker Oats*® and *Pepsico*®. Another US energy drink is *Jolt Cola*® initiated in 1985 by *Wet Planet Beverages*®. *Pepsico*® started marketing of *Josta*® in 1995. The most popular continental European energy drink is the Austrian product *Red Bull*® introduced in 1997, which holds a dominant market share in the US. *Coca Cola*® began production of *Powerade*® in 2001.

Features of energy drinks

The target audience for energy drinks is the young adult and those engaged in demanding physical activities. For this reason, the physical appearance of these products is intended to appeal to this group in terms of colors, images, and container design.

The amount of liquid in an energy drink ranges from 0.10 oz (*DynaPep*®) to 16 oz (*Full Throttle Fury Energy Drink Orange Flavor*®). The prices range from 89 cents to \$3.99 per item. The drinks are available locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The colors vary widely with various shades (black, blue, bronze, brown, gold, green, orange, pink, purple, silver, yellow). The color of the container sometimes reflects the color of the liquid. One product (*Radioactive Energy*®) has unique glow-in-the-dark colors (orange, yellow) for its two beverages.

The images on containers vary widely. Some contain tattoo-like emblems. Other icons include fierce or exotic animals (bull on *Red Bull*®, wasp on *Stinger*®, yellow jacket on *Stacker 2*®, lizard (*SoBe*®), barbed wire (*Kronik*®), a buxom woman (*Hooters*®), a figure of a person running in forward motion (*N-Motion*®), flames (*Nature's Nitro2Go*®), the joker reminiscent of figures on playing cards (*Joker*®), lightning bolts (*Jolt*®, *Kronik*®), a mermaid (*Starbucks*®), a planet (. . . *Lost*®), a star (*Rockstar*®), a Steven Seagal drawing with Asian script and lightning bolt (*Steven Seagal's Lightning Bolt*®), the trefoil international symbol for

radioactivity (*Radioactive Energy*®), and the black outline of attractive, youthful male and female figures (*OC Energy Insane XXX Energy Shot*®, *OC Energy Kik-It Original Energy Drink*®).

Many of the containers tend to be conventional cans similar to those for soft drinks. These cans, however, have some variation in their shapes and sizes (short and sleek or sometimes short and wide), which reflects the amount of liquid in them. Some containers, however, have unusual shapes, including a can with an unusual twist-off top (*Jolt*®), a tiny bottle (*Hype*®), a grenade shape (*Bomba*®), a blood transfusion bag (*Blood Energy*®), a bottle resembling a container for a black magic potion (*Health Energy Potion*®), a blister packet (*Dyna Pep*®), reminiscent of a *Hot Wheels*® racing car pack, and a dumbbell shape (*OC Energy*®).

The language of energy drinks

The orthography found on energy drinks ranges from conventional spelling to non-traditional spelling to suggest popular orthography (Sebba, 2007) as well as the irregular spelling conventions found in text messaging (Crystal, 2006; 2008).

Non-traditional spellings include *Bawls*® (= balls), *BooKoo*® (= French *beaucoup* “a lot”), *Bomba*® (= “bomb” plus the vowel “a”), *N-Motion*® (= “in motion”), and *XS Energy*® (= excess). “Kik-It” (*OC Energy Kik-It Original Energy Drink*®) is a variant spelling of “kick it” whose meanings include “to relax,” or “to engage in fun.” The blending of two words (*DynaPep*®) sometimes occurs. An interesting example of the abbreviation of two words and a deliberate reduction and misspelling of another is *Xyience Xenergy Cran Razz*® (“cran” = cranberry, “razz” = raspberry).

Lettering may suggest a foreign, perhaps Asian Indian, script (*Guru*®). Likewise, Asian-like lettering, which may or may not represent the symbols of a non-European language (*Steven Seagal’s Lightning Bolt*®), is another example.

Certain letters of the Roman alphabet have acquired special significance. The letter “X,” for example, is a case in point. Danesi (2009: 25) points out that “X” conjures up X-rated movies. The juxtaposition of three “X”s in a row (XXX) is a common reference to the highly salacious erotic content of certain films. The title of the popular cult television program *The X-Files*® (1993–2002) alludes to the mysterious and the unknown (see also Danesi, 2008; Nuessel, 1992: 89–90; Room, 1982: 193–202). Likewise, the use of XXL in clothing refers to garb that is of excessive size. The use of “X” in a product name, thus, evokes these same meanings (forbidden, unknown, excessive), for example, *Bawls Guarnexx*®, *Java Monster Mixxd Energy Juice*®, *Monster Energy XXL*®, *OC Energy Insane XXX Energy Shot*®, *Rip It Energy Fuel Citrus X*®, *Xyience Xenergy*®.

Abbreviations are another aspect of energy drinks “MDX” (*Mountain Dew MDX Sugar Free*®, *Mountain Dew MDX*®). The abbreviation “MDX” appears to refer to the brand name (*Mountain Dew*®) plus the letter “X” to suggest “extra.” “FRS” (*FRS Lemon Lime Healthy Energy*®, *FRS Wild berry Low Calorie Healthy Energy*®) stands for “free radical scavenger” or an antioxidant as described on its website (<http://www.frs.com/>). “NOS” (*NOS Energy Power Shot*®, *NOS Grape High Performance Energy*®) refers to “nitrous oxide systems” employed to enhance the performance of cars in auto races (<http://www.drinknos.com/>). “XXL” refers to a clothing size

(“extra, extra large”), and this abbreviation appears in the name of the drink *Monster Energy XXL*®. The “OC” of *OC Energy Insane XXX Energy*® and *OC Energy Kik-It Original Energy Drink*® is a reference to Orange County, California, and the lifestyle(s) that this location conjures up through popular television programs (*The OC*®, 2003–2007 on Fox Network; *The Real Housewives of Orange County*®, 2006– on Bravo Network). The *SoBe*® (<http://www.sobeworld.com/>) beverage brand is an abbreviation of “South Beach” (Florida). “AMP” (*Amp Energy Traction*®, a product of *Mountain Dew*®) has multiple referents including adenosine monophosphate, which is used to decrease bitterness in food preparation. Another reference is the unit of electricity known as ampère, named for André-Marie Ampère (1775–1836), a discoverer of electromagnetism. The latter abbreviation would suggest the electrifying effect of this brand of drink.

Many of the names of energy drinks contain evocative words or expressions. These verbal allusions are intended to evoke images of liveliness and vigor to suggest that the purchase and the use of this product will invigorate the user physiologically. Selected terms and expressions employed in the names of energy drink brands and products include “blast,” “fuel,” “hype,” “jolt,” “power trip,” “rip it” designed to suggest excess, power, strength, and dominance. A few suggest violence (“fury,” “hitman,” “monster”). The use of the word “shot” is a reference to certain alcoholic beverages such as whiskey and bourbon, which are served in shot glasses. In fact, some of the containers for certain energy drinks hold the approximate equivalent of the liquid in some shot glasses.

Slang or popular expressions are yet another aspect of energy drink names. The name of the energy drink *Crunk*® is a reference to a type of fusion hip-hop music, and the product’s website makes this explicit (<http://www.crunkenergydrink.com/>). A visit to the *Crunk*® website produces product information and it plays a crunk music tune. A “blue streak” (*Blue Streak*®) is an expression that means a person is moving very quickly in public. The term “all in” is a reference to the now quite popular card game of poker, and it means that a person has committed all of his or her money to a hand of cards in hopes of winning the game. “Full throttle” alludes to having a car going at full velocity. “Go girl” is a reduced form of the expression “you go girl,” which is a term of encouragement. The ingestion of an energy drink with this name would indicate that its use would have the same effect. “Chronic” is a US slang term for marijuana. It is possible that the alternative spelling of this word (“kronik”) is meant to have a drug-related allusion. The verb “rush” means to act quickly. The noun “rush” refers to the effect of ingesting certain drugs. “Burn” can be an allusion to burning calories. The use of this term indicates that the person who drinks this beverage will engage in physical activities that will burn off calories. It must be noted the expression “burn” has numerous meanings, including the “burning off of fat” through vigorous physical activity. “Rock star” is a generic allusion to the member of a popular music group, and it suggests celebrity status. “Pimp” refers to a person who engages in the management of prostitutes. “Balls” (*Bawls*®) is an expression that indicates that an individual is demonstrating audacious or imprudent behavior. “Guru” (*gu* means “darkness,” *ru* means “light”) is a word of Indian origin, and it refers to a person who is a mentor and spiritual guide in the Hindu religion.

Concluding remarks

The names of energy drink brand names and their various products provide an example of the various factors that go into the production of a brand name, a product aimed at a specific target audience, the containers for those products, and the deliberate use of language designed to appeal to the target audience of young and active adults. The product lines appeal to the interests of the target market including sex, sports, vigorous activity, and intense physiological stimulation. Effective marketing through cross-advertising with certain sports popular with young adults helps to enhance the market share of certain energy drinks.

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Appendix: Names of Energy Drink Brands and Their Products

Name of Energy Drink Brand and Energy Drink Products

ALL IN®

ALL IN Grape®

ALL IN Root Beer®

Bawls®

Bawls Guarana®

Bawls Guarnexx®

Blue Streak®

Blue Streak Sugar Free®

Blue Streak®

Bomba®

Bomba Energy Sugar Free®

Bomba Ruby Orange Energy®

Bomba Original Energy®

Bomba Berry®

Bomba Black Currant Energy®

BooKoo®*BooKoo Punch®**BooKoo Bitew®**BooKoo Citrus Energy Shot®**BooKoo Wild Berry Sugar Free®**BooKoo Wild Berry Energy Shot®**BooKoo Energy®***Crunk®***Crunk Citrus®**Crunk Berry®**Crunk Sugar Free®**Crunk®***DynaPep®***DynaPep Energy Micro-Shot Fresh Mint®**DynaPep Micro-Shot®***Health Energy®***Blood Energy Potion®**Health Energy Potion®**Mana Energy Potion®***FRS Energy®***FRS Lemon Lime Healthy Energy®**FRS Wild berry Low Calorie Healthy Energy®***Full Throttle®***Full Throttle Coffee Energy Vanilla®**Full Throttle Coffee Energy Carmel®**Full Throttle Fury Energy Drink Orange Flavor®**Full Throttle Nature is One Bad Mother®**Full Throttle Blue Demon Energy Drink®**Full Throttle Fury Energy Drink Sugar Free®**Full Throttle Energy Drink®***Go Girl®***Go Girl Glo®**Go Girl Sugar Free®***Guru®***Guru Lite 100 Percent Natural Energy Drink®**Guru Full on Energy Drink®**Guru 100 Percent Natural Energy Drink®***Tango®***Tango Energy Juice®**Rumba Energy Juice®***Hooters®***Hooters Sugar Free Lite Energy Drink®**Hooters Energy Drink®***Hype®***Hype Energy Shot Marionberry Flavor®*

Hype Enlite®

Hype MFP®

Hype Enegy®

Joker®

Joker Mad Energy Lo-Carb®

Joker Mad Energy®

Jolt®

Jolt Wild Grape®

Jolt Power Cola®

Jolt Ultra®

Jolt Blue®

Kronik®

Kronik Entourage®

Kronik Grind®

Kronik Low-Carb®

Kronik®

Liquid Ice®

Liquid Ice Sugar Free Drink®

Liquid Ice Energy Drink®

... **Lost®**

... *Lost Perfect 10®*

... *Lost®*

Nitrous®

Nitrous Monster Super Dry®

Monster Hitman®

Monster®

Java Monster Tea Energy Chai Hai®

Java Monster Mixxd Energy Juice®

Java Monster Coffee Energy Lo-Ball®

Java Monster Energy Big Black®

Java Monster Coffee Energy Loca Moca®

Java Monster Energy Mean Bean®

Monster Assault®

Monster Energy Khaos Juice®

Monster Energy Lo-Carb®

Monster Energy XXL®

Nitrous Monster Assault®

Mountain Dew®

World of Warcraft Mountain Dew

Game Fuel®

AMP Energy Traction®

AMP Energy Sugar Free®

AMP Energy Overdrive®

Mountain Dew MDX Sugar Free®

Mountain Dew MDX®

AMP Energy®

N-Motion®

N-Motion®

N-Motion Sugar Free®

N-Motion Caffeine Free®

Nature's Nitro®

Nature's Nitro2Go FirePower EX2 Extreme®

Nature's Nitro2Go®

NOS®

NOS Energy Power Shot®

NOS Grape High Performance Energy®

OC Energy®

OC Energy Insane XXX Energy Shot®

OC Energy Kik-It Original Energy Drink®

On Go®

On Go Energy Shot Mandarin Orange®

On Go Energy Shot Berry Blast®

On Go Energy Shot Lemon Lime®

Pimpjuice®

Pimpjuice Premium Anti-Oxidant Energy Drink®

Pimpjuice Premium Energy Drink®

Power Trip®

Power Trip Vitamin Energy Extreme Citrus®

Power Trip Mango®

Power Trip the Extreme®

Power Trip the Original Blue®

Power Trip o®

Radioactive Energy®

Radioactive Energy Sugar Free®

Radioactive Energy®

Red Bull®

Red Bull Energy Shot®

Red Bull Cola®

Real Red Bull®

Red Bull Sugar Free®

Real Red Bull®

Red Celeste®

Red Celeste Sugar Free®

Red Celeste®

Rip It Energy®

Rip It Energy Berry In-o-Scent®

Rip It Energy Fuel Lime Wrecker®

Rip It Fuel

Citrus X Sugar Free®

Rip It Energy Fuel Power Sugar Free®

Rip It Energy Fuel Citrus X®

Rip It Energy Fuel Power®

Rockstar®

Rockstar Punched®

Rockstar Juiced Guava®

Rockstar Zero Carb®

Rockstar Diet®

Rockstar®

Rush!®

Rush! Lite®

Rush!®

SoBe®

SoBe No Fear Gold®

SoBe No Fear Sugar Free®

SoBe Adrenalilne Rush®

SoBe No Fear®

Source Burn®

Source Burn Sugar Free®

Source Burn®

Stacker 2®

Stacker 2 Yellow Jacket Energy Shot®

Stinger Enraged Raspberry®

Stinger Pounding Punch®

Starbucks®

Starbucks Doubleshot Energy plus Coffee Cinnamon Dulce®

Starbucks Doubleshot Energy plus Coffee®

Starbucks doubleshot Energy plus Coffee Vanilla®

Steven Seagal's Lightning Bolt®

Steven Seagal's Lightning Bolt Cherry Charge Energy Drink®

Steven Seagal's Lightning Bolt Asian Experience Energy Drink®

XS Energy®

XS Energy Tea-Berry Blast Tea®

XS Energy Cranberry Grape Blast®

Xyience Xenergy®

Xyience Energy Big Apple®

Xyience Xenergy Clear®

Xyience Xenergy Cran Razz®

Notes on contributor

Frank Nuessel is Editor of *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*.

Correspondence to: Frank Nuessel, Department of Classical and Modern Languages,
University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292-0001, USA.

Email: fhnueso1@louisville.edu