

workouts. Both groups of students who drank the SoBe indicated that they were somewhat less fatigued than usual. That seemed plausible, especially considering the hefty shot of caffeine in each bottle of SoBe.

But it was the effect of the price, not the effect of the caffeine, that we were after. Would higher-priced SoBe reduce fatigue better than the discounted SoBe? As you can imagine from the experiment with Veladone, it did. The students who drank the higher-priced beverage reported less fatigue than those who had the discounted drink.

These results were interesting, but they were based on the participants' impressions of their own state—their subjective reports. How could we test SoBe more directly and objectively? We found a way: SoBe claims to provide “energy for your mind.” So we decided to test that claim by using a series of anagrams.

It would work like this. Half of the students would buy their SoBe at full price, and the other half would buy it at a discount. (We actually charged their student accounts, so in fact their parents were the ones paying for it.) After consuming the drinks, the students would be asked to watch a movie for 10 minutes (to allow the effects of the beverage to sink in, we explained). Then we would give each of them a 15-word puzzle, with 30 minutes to solve as many of the problems as they could. (For example, when given the set TUPPIL, participants had to rearrange it to PULPIT—or they would have to rearrange FRIVEY, RANCOR, and SVALIE to get . . . ).

We had already established a baseline, having given the word-puzzle test to a group of students who had not drunk SoBe. This group got on average nine of the 15 items right.