

What happened when we gave the puzzles to the students who drank SoBe? The students who had bought it at the full price also got on average about nine answers right—this was no different from the outcome for those who had no drink at all. But more interesting were the answers from the discounted SoBe group: they averaged 6.5 questions right. What can we gather from this? Price does make a difference, and in this case the difference was a gap of about 28 percent in performance on the word puzzles.

So SoBe didn't make anyone smarter. Does this mean that the product itself is a dud (at least in terms of solving word puzzles)? To answer this question, we devised another test. The following message was printed on the cover of the quiz booklet: "Drinks such as SoBe have been shown to improve mental functioning," we noted, "resulting in improved performance on tasks such as solving puzzles." We also added some fictional information, stating that SoBe's Web site referred to more than 50 scientific studies supporting its claims.

What happened? The group that had the full-price drinks still performed better than those that had the discounted drinks. But the message on the quiz booklet also exerted some influence. Both the discount group and the full-price group, having absorbed the information and having been primed to expect success, did better than the groups whose quiz cover didn't have the message. And this time the SoBe did make people smarter. When we hyped the drink by stating that 50 scientific studies found SoBe to improve mental functioning, those who got the drink at the discount price improved their score (in answering additional questions) by 0.6, but those who got both the hype and the full price improved by 3.3 additional questions. In other words, the mes-