RETAILER PERCEPTION OF PREMIUM ENERGY DRINK VARIANTS AMID COMPETITIVE BRAND CLUTTER: A STUDY OF RETAIL OUTLETS IN BENGALURU

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Abstract

This study examines the perception and stocking of premium variants of energy drinks by retailers where there are several competitive energy drink brands available. The basis of this study is field notes gathered through a Summer Internship Research Project (SIRP) conducted at Red Bull India, wherein retailers of the General Trade segment in Bengaluru have been visited. For putting the field study into perspective with respect to a broader market context, an extended version of the study has provided details about the Indian FMCG & General Trade industry, energy drinks, and six key competitors.

In India, the energy drinks market size stood at around USD 918.23 million in 2024 and is expected to be worth USD 1,950.32 million by 2030, exhibiting a CAGR of 13.44% (TechSci Research, 2024). According to more recent figures from Mordor Intelligence (2026), the size of the market stands slightly lower at USD 0.82 billion in 2026 and is forecasted to grow at a slightly lower CAGR of 2.25% till 2031. It can be seen that the market size for this category of products varies considerably according to the methodologies used, yet all reports point towards the same trend of growth and increasing premiumisation, sugar-free and flavored options, despite strong competition from low-cost brands such as Sting and Campa Energy.

As part of this internship, retail outlets were covered across Bengaluru's General Trade channel, with the main focus on the standalone segment (an estimated 700 stores in the standalone segment, of which 248 were visited). Counting standalone stores together with the other channels covered in the same fieldwork, such as wine shops and chemists, complete information on the Red Bull variants stocked was available for 255 stores. For some of these stores, the range stocked was worked out from the type of cooler placed there, since a Main Placement Cooler (MPC) or Red Bull Cooler (RBC) almost always means the full variant range is present, unless the visit notes clearly showed the store had turned a variant down. This data is the basis for the findings in this report.

The main finding is this: stores that had more competitor brands on their shelves were not less likely to stock the full Red Bull range or accept a variant push. If anything, the numbers show the opposite trend stores with more competitors present were somewhat more likely to stock the full range and accept variants. This is discussed further in the report and connected back to the industry, category, and competitor context, and to the 'billboard effect' idea from the literature.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The energy drink market in India has grown a lot in the last few years. Red Bull competes with many other brands like Sting, Monster, Predator, Campa Energy, Hell Energy, and Thums Up Charged for shelf space in General Trade

(GT) stores. As set out in the Abstract, market-size estimates for the category vary by source, but all agree it keeps growing, with premium, sugar-free, and flavour-led variants forming a growing part of that growth. Along with its regular product, Red Bull also sells premium variants like Sugar Free and flavour editions such as Red, Yellow, Green, and Pink.

Retailers decide which products they want to keep in their shop. A shop that already sells many competitor energy drinks may or may not want to add Red Bull's full range of variants. This report looks at whether this is true using real field data, and places that field data inside a fuller picture of the industry, the category, and the named competitors a Bengaluru retailer is actually choosing between.

This study uses store visit notes collected during a Summer Sales Internship on General Trade growth in Bengaluru. As part of the internship, stores were visited and notes were taken on which competitor brands were present and how much of the Red Bull range each store was stocking.

1.2 Problem Statement

Red Bull continues to launch premium variants, but it's unclear if competitor presence in a retail store affects how much of the range that shop is willing to keep. This report uses tables from real field data, supported by industry and competitor context, to look at this question.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To develop a profile of the FMCG/GT industry in India as well as the segment for energy drinks that is dominated by Red Bull.
- To profile the competitive brands that Red Bull has to compete against in the Bengaluru GT market.
- To understand how many other competing energy drink brands are available at the same time in stores in Bengaluru.
- To know whether all the varieties of Red Bull are available in stores or some varieties only.
- To see how different stores that have higher numbers of competitors are compared to those stores that have fewer competitors.
- To provide practical recommendations to the field sales and trade marketing teams based on the above tables.

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the state of the Indian General Trade and energy drinks market, and how does Red Bull fit into it?
- How many energy drink brands are usually stocked in a store in Bengaluru?
- What percentage of stores stock the full premium range of Red Bull variants?
- Do stores with more competitor brands stock a different amount of the Red Bull range compared to stores with fewer competitor brands?

1.5 Research Objective

Objective: To find out whether stores with more competitor energy drink brands behave differently from stores with fewer competitor brands, in terms of (a) how much of the Red Bull range they stock, and (b) whether they accept or reject a variant push.

Two simple factors are compared throughout this report:

Factor 1: Number of competitor energy drink brands stocked at the store. Stores are grouped into three simple levels: No Competitors, Low (1-2 brands), and High (3 or more brands).

Factor 2: How the store responded either (a) how much of the Red Bull range it stocks (Full Range or Partial Range), or (b) whether it accepted or rejected a variant push, as noted during the store visit.

1.6 Scope of the Study

- Geography: Retail outlets across many beats/routes in Bengaluru (Ulsoor, JP Nagar, Devasandra, Malleshwaram, Hennur, Nagarbhavi, Kengeri, Bellandur, Banashankari, and more).
- Store types: Standalone stores, Wine shops, Chemists, and other General Trade formats.
- Products: The different types of Red Bull, such as Regular, Sugar Free, and Flavour, versus the competing energy drink brands available in the same store include Sting, Monster/Predator, Campa Energy, Hell Energy, and Thums Up Charged.
- Time: Field observation sessions conducted from April to May 2026.

2. Industry Profile

In analyzing the financials of Red Bull, it is first important to have an understanding of the market that the company operates in, namely the Indian FMCG market, and the channel through which the majority of India's packed beverages move to the consumer - the General Trade (GT) channel.

2.1 The Indian FMCG and Beverage Industry

India's overall retail market is projected to reach roughly Rs. 1,90,00,000 crore (about USD 2.17 trillion) by 2034, growing at a 9% CAGR, according to BCG-RAI estimates cited by IBEF. Organised retail supermarkets, hypermarkets, and branded chains accounts for only about 18% of this market. The remaining 82% runs through unorganised retail, principally the country's roughly 12-13 million kirana and standalone stores. This single fact shapes almost everything about how an FMCG or beverage brand goes to market in India: reach depends on winning shelf space store by store, not chain by chain.

Energy drinks form a tiny yet growing segment of packaged beverages along with carbonated soft drinks, juices, and packaged water. According to Nielsen statistics, General Trade holds around 70-75% of the total FMCG market, and the proportion of General Trade for a cold, impulse purchase segment such as energy drinks may be even higher because here, what counts is a cold can/bottle consumed on an impulse rather than a basket purchase.

2.2 General Trade: Structure and Economics

General Trade refers to the unorganized retail chain of kirana stores, standalone provision stores, wine shops, chemists, paan shops, and eateries. These are individually owned, family-owned, low-margin operations with high trust between the shop owner and customer. An FMCG/beverage brand makes its way into the basket of a GT consumer via several stages of channel such as Brand → Super Stockist (as applicable in some geography) → Distributor → Retailer → Consumer, using the sales staff consisting of TSIs and DSRs operating on fixed daily 'beats'.

That is the reason why the methodology used for this report—daily beat visits, cooler checks, and store-level comments—is structured like how GT really operates, where relationship and shelf presence are as important as its national advertising campaign.

General Trade vs Modern Trade vs Quick Commerce

Channel	Share of FMCG Sales	Character
General Trade (GT)	~70-75%	Kirana, standalone, wine shop, chemist outlets; credit-based, relationship-driven, beat-planned.
Modern Trade (MT)	Included in organised retail's ~18%	Supermarkets, hypermarkets; centralised procurement, premium shelf placement, data-driven merchandising.
Quick Commerce	Fast-growing, still small base	App-led 10-15 minute delivery; increasingly relevant for impulse categories like energy drinks in metros.

2.3 Regulatory Environment

This product category has been the subject of regulation in 2026. In July 2026, Indian authorities ordered PepsiCo, Red Bull, and Monster not to market their products as "energy drinks", giving them 90 days to comply. This decision came after enforcement actions taken by Indian authorities in various states, where they had confiscated the stocks of Sting, Campa Energy, and Red Bull in Rajasthan. Regulatory efforts in India have focused on labeling and marketing of instant energy drinks. The Indian Beverage Association and other industry representatives have stated that their intention is to be in full compliance with regulations while working with regulators. For a product category, which is expected to grow consistently at double-digit volumes for many years to come, this is a significant development.

3. Energy Drink Category Profile

3.1 Category Evolution and Global Context

Worldwide, the energy drinks sector is dominated by a select few multinational companies Red Bull GmbH, Monster Beverage Corporation, PepsiCo, The Coca-Cola Company, and Anheuser-Busch InBev that collectively make up the majority of the category's value on a global scale. Red Bull, which was established in Austria back in 1987, created the initial positioning of the category through the performance and alertness aspect of the product, along with the "Gives You Wiings" concept, capturing about 40% of the global energy-drinks market by the early 2010s. Since then, the sector has evolved in terms of regional and mass-market competitors due to its growth in markets like India.

3.2 The Indian Energy Drinks Market

The brand Red Bull entered the Indian market in 2009 as the country's first energy drink which was sold at a price greater than Rs. 100 and was a premium offering targeting wealthy consumers who were active. Monster entered the market in 2014 as a lower-priced offering and was banned in 2015 by FSSAI owing to the use of non-approved ingredients, thus creating a market gap. PepsiCo's Sting has filled this market gap by being launched in 2017-2020 with a Rs. 20 PET bottle across the nation and has been growing fast, especially among 15-19 years old and rural customers according to Euromonitor. The industry now estimates the energy drinks market in India to be worth about Rs. 3,500 crores (USD 470 million) of retail value, consuming about 33.5 million litres per annum a number which has grown about 35% from 2020 numbers and the expectation is for the market to surpass Rs. 10,000 crores

by 2028. Retail sales are forecast by Euromonitor to rise to USD 1.6 billion by 2028, growing at about 12.6% CAGR, which is higher than energy drinks' growth in the US or China.

3.3 Category Segments: Premium, Mass, and Functional

Three broad price-and-positioning tiers exist side by side on a Bengaluru GT shelf:

- Premium (Rs. 100+): Red Bull and Monster, sold mainly in 250ml cans, positioned on global heritage, performance, and lifestyle.
- Mass / value (Rs. 10-30): Sting's Rs. 20 PET bottle, Campa Energy's Gold Boost and Berry Kick lines (as low as Rs. 10 for 150ml), and Hell Energy's competitively priced cans built for high-frequency, low-ticket impulse purchase, especially in rural and semi-urban General Trade.
- Functional / emerging: newer entrants such as Centrum Recharge, a Rs. 10 vitamin-fortified sachet mix, signal a further sub-segment built around everyday functional benefit rather than an "energy drink" claim a positioning that may gain relevance given the 2026 labelling directive discussed in Section 2.3.

3.4 Premiumization, Sugar-Free, and Flavour-Led Trends

Even as mass-market volume growth has been driven by low-priced PET and can formats, the category is simultaneously putting premium at the top end. By product type, traditional energy drinks led with about 32.56% of India's energy drinks market in 2025, while natural/organic energy drinks are forecast to grow faster, at roughly 4.21% CAGR through 2031, according to Mordor Intelligence. By packaging, PET bottles held around 51.25% share in 2025 (reflecting the mass segment's scale), while glass bottles associated with premium formats are the fastest-growing pack type. The context of the shelf for the Red Bull variants, including Red, Yellow, Green, Pink, and Sugar Free, is as follows: they are an extension of the Red Bull brand in the premium category as opposed to direct price competition with Sting and Campa Energy.

4. Competitor Analysis

4.1 Competitive Landscape Overview

The Indian energy drinks market is one of the most consolidated in terms of market shares, with top five players namely, Red Bull GmbH, PepsiCo, Monster Beverage Corporation, The Coca-Cola Company, and Anheuser-Busch InBev accounting for an aggregate 93% of market shares, as per reports by MarkNtel Advisors. The dynamics in terms of market leadership has changed dramatically post the entry of Red Bull into the market in 2009. One analysis report mentions that Red Bull's share fell from approximately 75% in 2018 to single-digit shares in 2023, while that of Sting increased from 25% in 2018 to 90% in 2023, whereas another source estimates the market share of Sting to be around 48% in 2022 approximated numbers, but in either case, it has managed to capture a significant market share through its low price PET strategy.

4.2 Brand Profiles

Sting (PepsiCo)

Sting is the most evident case where the mass-market approach succeeded on a large scale in India. Launched for trial in 2017 and rolled out nationally from 2020 with a Rs. 20 250ml PET bottle, Sting has become the leader by volume in this segment (refer Section 4.4 for Sting's distribution). With its fizzy and fruit-flavored taste, along with its positioning as "Electrifying Energy," Sting is different from Red Bull that uses the straight-can approach with performance positioning.

Monster and Predator (Monster Beverage Corporation)

The company entered India in 2014 as a budget substitute to Red Bull. However, its products were banned by the FSSAI in 2015 due to using ingredients that had not been approved. After that, Monster Beverage Corporation introduced Predator in 2022, which became another brand competing for the mid-range price segment developed by Sting and Campa Energy. The Monster product itself remains in the premium segment competing with Red Bull.

Campa Energy (Reliance Consumer Products)

The heritage soft drink brand 'Campa' was acquired by Reliance Industries in 2022 for about Rs. 22 crores and was subsequently re-launched in 2023 through RCPL (Reliance Consumer Products Limited), first in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and then across the country. In addition to its cola, lemon, and orange soft drinks, the energy range of Campa (Gold Boost, Berry Kick) is competitively priced, even as low as Rs. 10 for a 150 ml bottle.

Hell Energy

Hell Energy is a Hungarian brand that has established itself as the top seller within the canned drinks sub-category of India's market, according to Nielsen. This product competes on price within the can segment category (about Rs. 1,200 for a case of 24 x 250ml, compared to about Rs. 2,400 for the equivalent case of Red Bull), which often leads to Hell Energy becoming an alternative due to its lower price.

Thums Up Charged (The Coca-Cola Company)

Coca-Cola launched in the category in 2022 by offering Thums Up Charged Berry Bolt (later renamed to Charged) by capitalizing on the existing "desi strength" brand equity of Thums Up and the vast GT network of Coca-Cola without having to create an energy drink brand from scratch. This allowed Coca-Cola to quickly enter into the mass/mid segment of the market.

4.3 Positioning Map

Below is a table that categorizes the six brands most frequently referenced in field visits in terms of price category, pack configuration, and primary positioning.

Brand	Price Tier	Primary Pack	Core Positioning
Red Bull	Premium (Rs. 100+)	250ml can	Global heritage, performance, "Gives You Wiings"
Monster	Premium (Rs. 90-110)	350-500ml can	Youth, gaming, bold flavour range
Predator	Mid (Rs. 40-60)	Can	Value challenger to Sting from Monster's stable
Sting	Mass (Rs. 20)	250ml PET	Mass energy, cricket/youth culture, rural reach
Campa Energy	Mass (Rs. 10-30)	150-330ml PET/can	Value + heritage nostalgia, Reliance retail muscle
Hell Energy	Mid (Rs. 45-55)	250ml can	Imported, price-competitive can-format specialist
Thums Up Charged	Mass-Mid	PET/can	"Desi" strength positioning riding existing CSD network

4.4 Distribution Channel Comparison

Other than price, the manner in which each brand gets to Bengaluru GT shelves is different, and this determines how cool and how much shelf space each has:

Brand	Distribution Model	GT Reach Character
Red Bull	Hub & spoke via appointed distributors; heavy reliance on wholesalers and cash-and-carry (e.g., Metro) for redistribution	Deep in premium-focused and high-footfall outlets; visibility built through owned MPC/RBC coolers
Sting	Rides PepsiCo bottler Varun Beverages' pan-India network	Very broad over 2 million outlets by 2022, including deep rural coverage
Campa Energy	Reliance Consumer Products' retail and distribution infrastructure	Rapidly scaling from a 2023 relaunch base, aided by Reliance's existing FMCG reach
Monster / Predator	Historically described as "patchy" in India, rebuilt after the 2015 ban via regional distributor partners	Concentrated in urban and semi-urban outlets rather than uniform pan-India coverage
Thums Up Charged	Coca-Cola's existing CSD distribution and cooler network	Wide, riding on Thums Up/Coca-Cola's established GT footprint

This comparison is relevant for the results presented in Section 8: The Red Bull model relies on the ability to win and maintain dedicated cooler space (MPC/RBC) rather than distribution volume alone. It is precisely for this reason that the willingness of a store to stock the complete Red Bull line-up the question that this report answers is a relevant trade marketing indicator.

5. SWOT Analysis: Red Bull in Bengaluru General Trade

Based on the background provided above for the industry, the category, and competition and based on the insights from this report on the field a SWOT analysis for the positioning of Red Bull in the GT Standalone segment of Bengaluru is presented below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Good global brand equity and variety of flavours (Regular, Sugar Free, Red/Yellow/Green/Pink flavours). The coolers through MPC/RBC visibility campaign ensures Red Bull gets its own branded space in many retailers that do not give such space to their mass competitors. Findings from this report: crowded stores are more likely to stock the whole product range.	Premium pricing (above Rs. 100) against Rs. 10-30 mass segment entries restricts market reach. Lower rural and semi-urban coverage than PET-led distribution by Sting. Reliant on distributor/wholesaler pull strategy as opposed to company-owned bottler distribution chain like PepsiCo and Coca-Cola.

Opportunities	Threats
Independent shops currently represent an imbalance of 14-17% share of Red Bull's Karnataka/Bengaluru business despite being part of a smaller network of stores, according to internal trade data room for further improvement here. Penetration of SKUs per store is possible (average of 2.2 SKUs per independent shop versus 3+ targeted). Eat and drink shops have the greatest rate of stocking full range (90.9%) an untapped occasion.	Low price-aggressive entrants (Sting, Campa Energy, Hell Energy) squeeze category economics and retail margins for premium product line. Directive from FSSAI in July 2026 for brands to remove "energy drink" label within 90 days leaves immediate marketing and packaging uncertainty. State level regulatory actions (for example, Rajasthan) indicate increasing regulations across the category.

6. Literature Review

Prior to constructing the tables, an extensive literature review was conducted about shopkeeper product selection practices, consumer response to product assortment and choice of functional energy drinks. The sources included in the literature review are twenty in number and have been grouped under five themes. A summary table and the contributions made by the current study are given below.

6.1 Shelf Space, Assortment, and Retailer Decision-Making

The shop owners determine what goes onto the shelf. The retailers make category-by-category decisions on what should be stocked in their stores, based on which products make them the most money, not just the one specific product (Basuroy, Mantrala & Walters, 2001). In other words, it is the shop owner who has already stock many different energy drinks who makes the decision regarding Red Bull.

Shelf space is limited. Older research by Drèze, Hoch and Purk (1994) found that shops only have a fixed amount of shelf and chiller space, and how much space a product gets affects how well it sells. This supports the idea that a shop with many competitor brands may have less room for a brand's full range.

Shelf-space allocation is a well-studied operations problem. Hübner and Kuhn (2012) and, more recently, Bianchi-Aguiar et al. (2021) review decades of research modelling how retailers should divide limited shelf and chiller space across competing products to maximise category profit. Their reviews confirm that shelf space allocation is treated in the literature as a genuine constrained-optimisation problem for the retailer reinforcing why a store's decision to give Red Bull a full six-SKU cooler slot, rather than a partial one, is a meaningful trade-off rather than an automatic yes.

6.2 Category Captainship and Brand-Retailer Power

Category decisions depend on the bigger picture. Kurtuluş and Toktay (2011) study "category captainship" arrangements where a retailer leans on one leading manufacturer to help manage a whole product category rather than deciding everything itself. Their game-theoretic analysis shows that which manufacturer ends up shaping shelves and pricing decisions depends on how differentiated products are and how scarce shelf space is. When applied to energy drinks, the backing provided by this argument would be comparing the number of competing brands to the range of Red Bull, with actual data, as opposed to assuming that the shopkeeper always considers Red Bull just one of many lines.

6.3 The Billboard Effect and Cross-Brand Traffic

However, having more product brands on a shelf may also lead to increased attention. Studies by Wolfe (1968) and Koschat (2008), cited in retail category management literature, demonstrated that when a shelf contains many various products, it attracts more consumers' attention and more buyers within the whole category. This is called the "billboard effect". Thus, when a store contains many energy drinks of different competitors, it is also likely to be an effective environment for selling the energy drinks category in general, which will make the retailer more eager to carry more Red Bull products, rather than less.

6.4 Choice Overload and the Paradox of Assortment

More choice does not always help. The most influential study here is Iyengar and Lepper's (2000) "jam study": shoppers offered 24 jam varieties showed more initial interest but bought far less often (about 3% conversion) than shoppers offered just 6 varieties (about 30% conversion). This choice-overload effect has since been replicated across many product categories and is directly relevant to how a shopkeeper acting almost like a consumer choosing which brands to "buy into" for their shelf might respond to an already-crowded energy drink chiller.

The effect is real but conditional, not universal. Chernev, Böckenholt and Goodman (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of the choice-overload literature and found that the effect depends heavily on moderating factors including how easy the options are to compare (Gourville & Soman, 2005), how clear the shopper's preferences already are, and how the assortment is organised. Diehl and Poynor (2010) add that a larger assortment can raise expectations, and satisfaction, in ways that sometimes-offset overload effects. Schwartz, Ward, Monterosso, Lyubomirsky, White and Lehman (2002) separately show that people who try to "maximize" (pick the single best option) are more prone to overload and post-choice regret than people who "satisfice" (pick a good-enough option) a distinction that may map onto how differently a value-conscious retailer versus a premium-focused retailer thinks about Red Bull's variant range. Schwartz's (2004) book The Paradox of Choice popularised these findings for a general audience and remains a widely cited synthesis of the overload literature.

Taken together, this literature cuts both ways for this report's core question: choice-overload research would predict that a shopkeeper facing many competitor brands might narrow down to fewer SKUs per brand (supporting the shelf-space-constraint view in Section 6.1), while the billboard-effect literature (Section 6.3) predicts the opposite. This tension is exactly what the field data in Section 8 is used to test.

6.5 Store Environment, Impulse Buying, and Functional Beverage Choice

What is around a product affects how people buy it. A research conducted on 733 customers in Chennai revealed that environmental factors associated with the product such as the arrangement of the environment, lighting, and other factors have an influence on the impulsive purchase of the customer (Mohan, Sivakumaran & Sharma, 2013). Thus, this proves the fact that the presence of other products on the shelves, including the competitors' products, influences the perception of the category by the consumer.

Impulse buying is not only an actual phenomenon but one that has been studied as well. Beatty and Ferrell (1998) explain impulse buying as the sudden feeling of making a purchase without having planned to do so. This concept is relevant because the choice made by a store owner about what to stock may be based on the products' ability to attract the buyer's attention among other products.

Today's buyers of functional beverages do significant research before making a purchase. According to Alalwan (2025)'s review on consumer psychology in functional beverages, today's buyers attach much

more importance to the perception of health benefits, ingredient information, and social proof compared to their predecessors and tend to do independent research rather than believe advertisements. Dimitrova et al. (2025) develop a direct functional-beverage purchase intention model and prove that egoistic (self-focused) value orientations as well as altruistic (other-focused) value orientations, perceptions of health benefits, and innovativeness are important predictors of purchase intention. Toorani et al. (2024) test the influence of attitude and subjective norm on female employees' functional-drink consumption intention using the Theory of Planned Behavior. Chang et al. (2020) reveal that health values and health orientations of young consumers predict functional-beverage purchase intention. Hallak et al. (2022) show that consumers are ready to pay more for healthier beverages but price is a factor constraining purchase in hospitality settings. Collectively, this body of research reveals that not only does shelf clutter influence the extent to which consumers and retailers interact with the product but that perceived benefit and trust also play an important role a point worth keeping in mind when evaluating the purely descriptive results of this report.

6.6 Literature Summary Table

No	Author(s) & Year	Focus	Relevance to This Study
1	Basuroy, Mantrala & Walters (2001)	Retailer category management & pricing	Retailers, not brands, control shelf allocation
2	Drèze, Hoch & Purk (1994)	Shelf management & space elasticity	Shelf space is a limited, competed-for resource
3	Hübner & Kuhn (2012)	Shelf space planning review	Shelf allocation is a formal constrained-optimisation problem
4	Bianchi-Aguiar et al. (2021)	Retail shelf space planning review	Confirms breadth/depth trade-offs retailers face
5	Kurtuluş & Toktay (2011)	Category captainship	Category decisions depend on manufacturer-retailer power balance
6	Wolfe (1968)	Style merchandise control	Origin of the 'billboard effect' idea
7	Koschat (2008)	Store inventory & demand (magazines)	More stock variety can lift category-wide demand
8	Iyengar & Lepper (2000)	Choice overload jam study	Large assortments can reduce, not raise, conversion
9	Chernev, Böckenholt & Goodman (2015)	Choice overload meta-analysis	Overload effect is real but moderated by context
10	Gourville & Soman (2005)	Attribute alignability in assortments	Comparability of options moderates overload
11	Diehl & Poynor (2010)	Assortment size & expectations	Larger assortments can also raise satisfaction
12	Schwartz et al. (2002)	Maximising vs satisficing	Decision style affects sensitivity to large assortments
13	Schwartz (2004)	The Paradox of Choice (book)	General synthesis of the choice-overload literature

No	Author(s) & Year	Focus	Relevance to This Study
14	Mohan, Sivakumaran & Sharma (2013)	Store environment & impulse buying (Chennai)	Shelf context shapes unplanned purchase Behavior
15	Beatty & Ferrell (1998)	Impulse buying precursors	Explains why shelf presence itself drives sales
16	Alalwan (2025)	Consumer psychology in functional beverages	Buyers now research health claims before purchase
17	Dimitrova, Ilieva & Terziyska (2025)	Functional beverage purchase intention	Health benefit & innovativeness predict intent to buy
18	Toorani et al. (2024)	Functional drinks & Theory of Planned Behavior	Attitude & subjective norm shape consumption
19	Chang, Ma & Chen (2020)	Young consumers' health values	Health orientation predicts purchase intention
20	Hallak, Onur & Lee (2022)	Willingness to pay for healthy beverages	Consumers pay a premium for health, but price is a barrier

6.7 What This Study Adds

The majority of literature that exists focuses on shelf space and categories in a general sense, and most of it tends to focus on the consumer perspective rather than the shopkeeper perspective. The literature reviewed above on choice overload and functional beverages is no different in that respect it focuses on how the end-consumer will react to an overloaded chiller but does not consider how the owner of the chiller makes his/her choice. In addition, there is very limited empirical evidence on this topic for the Indian energy drink industry. The current report attempts to fill this void.

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Data Source

- **Major source**: Store visit data obtained from Summer Sales Internship program related to General Trade retail stores in Bengaluru through multiple channels such as standalone stores, wine stores, and chemist stores in the period of April 2026 to May 2026.

- **Other sources**: Twenty academic studies and reviews on shelf space, category management, choice overload, and functional beverage consumer behavior (refer to Literature Review & References) along with industry and market reports (TechSci Research, Mordor Intelligence, Euromonitor, MarkNtel Advisors, etc.) for creation of the Industry Profile, Category Profile, and Competitor Analysis sections.

7.2 Sampling

- **Selection of outlets**: The stores selected were those that were visited by the interns as per the assigned routes (or beats) every day during the internship. Thus, the selection of the stores is a fairly large representation of General Trade but definitely not a random sample.

- **Geographical area covered**: General Trade retail outlets in the city of Bengaluru that could potentially sell Red Bull and its energy drink competitors, giving special attention to the standalone segment.

- **Size of sample**: As the primary target was the standalone segment, there were around 700 stores in Bengaluru where 248 outlets were selected. However, if we consider both the segments of General Trade which were covered during the internship field work, complete details regarding the variety of Red Bull SKUs were known in 255 stores. Out of these 255 stores, the number of competitor brands were also known in 121 stores.

7.3 How the Data Was Grouped

What	How It Was Grouped
Competitor Clutter Level	Determined the number of competitor brand names noted on the visit, which was categorized into No Competitors (0), Few Competitors (1-2), and Many Competitors (3 or more).
Range of Red Bull Stocked	"Full Range" if the notes mentioned "All Variants", or if there was an MPC or RBC cooler on file for that store but the notes did not mention that a particular variant was turned down. "Partial Range" if the store stocked Red Bull but not the entire range (either Regular only, or Regular plus Sugar Free), or if there was a cooler in place but the retailer turned down a variant. All stores without any indication of range, cooler, or closed store were excluded from the list.
Accepted or Rejected	The number comes from the field tag for the particular visit. Any visit that was tagged as a reject or an accept was included, while other tags such as Cooler Request and Store Closed were disregarded because they are not accept/reject events.

8. Findings

8.1 How Many Stores Were Looked At

255 retailers gave complete information about the variants they stock. Of these:

- 207 stores (81.2%) kept the FULL range.
- 48 stores (18.8%) kept only a PARTIAL range.

Of these 255 stores, 121 also had a clear count of competitor brands, so these 121 are used in Table 1 below.

8.2 Table 1: Competitor Clutter Level vs. Range of Red Bull Stocked

Competitor Clutter Level	Full Range	Partial Range	Total Stores
No Competitors	13 (72.2%)	5 (27.8%)	18
Low (1-2 brands)	41 (57.7%)	30 (42.3%)	71
High (3+ brands)	26 (81.2%)	6 (18.8%)	32

Looking at this table, stores with high competitor clutter (3 or more brands) actually had the highest share of stores carrying the full range, at 81.2%, well above the 57.7% seen among stores with low clutter. This goes against what one might expect: having more competing brands on the shelf did not stop a store from carrying Red Bull's full range.

8.3 Table 2: Competitor Clutter Level vs. Accepted or Rejected the Variant

Competitor Clutter Level	Accepted	Rejected	Total Stores
No Competitors	5 (35.7%)	9 (64.3%)	14
Low (1-2 brands)	6 (22.2%)	21 (77.8%)	27
High (3+ brands)	7 (53.8%)	6 (46.2%)	13

Looking at this table, stores with high competitor clutter accepted the variant more often (53.8%) than stores with low clutter (22.2%). Once again, this runs opposite to what one might expect.

8.4 Table 3: Store Type vs. Range of Red Bull Stocked

Store Type	Full Range	Partial Range	Total Stores
Standalone	64 (68.1%)	30 (31.9%)	94
Wine Shop	122 (87.8%)	17 (12.2%)	139
Eating & Drinking	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	11
Chemist	6 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6

Looking at this table, wine shops actually make up the largest part of the sample (139 stores), followed by standalone stores (94), with smaller numbers of eating & drinking outlets and chemists. Wine shops carried the full range slightly more often (87.8%) than standalone stores (68.1%), though both groups show fairly high full-range coverage overall and, as noted in Section 5's SWOT, eating & drinking outlets show the single highest full-range rate (90.9%) despite being the smallest channel by store count.

9. Discussion

The tables above point to a clear pattern: stores with more competitor energy drink brands were not less likely to stock the full Red Bull range or accept a variant push. If anything, they were somewhat more likely to do both.

This matches one of the ideas from the literature review the 'billboard effect' (Wolfe, 1968; Koschat, 2008) more than it matches the choice-overload literature (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Chernev, Böckenholt & Goodman, 2015). A shop with many energy drink brands on its shelf may simply be a shop where energy drinks sell well in general. If the shopkeeper is already seeing good sales from many competitor brands including mass-market volume drivers like Sting and Campa Energy discussed in Section 4 they may be more willing to keep Red Bull's full range too, not less willing. In other words, competitor presence here appears to function less like a constrained shelf fighting for the same six SKUs, and more like a signal of overall category demand at that store consistent with the category-captainship view (Kurtuluş & Toktay, 2011) that a store's category-level decisions can matter more than any single brand's own push.

9.1 Limitations

- Visits to the stores were conducted following the daily routine, not randomly, and thus the data gathered cannot necessarily be generalized for all the stores in Bengaluru.
- Notes about each store were taken during different days of a tight research schedule, which means that there could be variations in the level of detail in each note.

- When a store's Red Bull range was not mentioned in the notes, but the store was mentioned to have a Main Placement Cooler or Red Bull Cooler, it is assumed that the range of Red Bull products in the store was full, unless the notes suggested that the retailer had refused to accept some particular variant.
- This report only highlights patterns in numbers and percentages. It does not prove that competitors influence the amount of the range a store is stocking it only describes the findings of the visits to the stores.
- Numbers of the market size and market share mentioned in the Industry, Category, and Competitors sections differ among various research agencies (TechSci Research, Mordor Intelligence, Euromonitor, MarkNtel Advisors).

10. Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to check whether there is any possibility that stores stocking higher number of competing energy drinks have lower stocks of the superior Red Bull range or are less receptive to variant promotion. However, according to observations made in more than one hundred actual visits to stores in Bengaluru, the answer is negative.

Set against the wider industry and competitor picture built up in Sections 2 through 5, this finding makes practical sense. Red Bull is not fighting Sting, Campa Energy, or Hell Energy for the same price-sensitive shopper it occupies a distinct premium tier, and a store that has built energy-drink category traffic through mass-market brands appears just as willing, if not more willing, to also carry Red Bull's full range. For Red Bull's trade marketing team, this means competitor brand count alone should not be used as a reason to skip a store for full-range placement. A store with many competitor brands already on the shelf may be a good place to place the full range, since it could mean the store sees good demand for energy drinks overall. Store size, footfall, and how busy the store is may be more useful things to look at than competitor count alone along with the channel-specific opportunities highlighted in the SWOT, such as the still-underleveraged eating & drinking segment and continued headroom to lift average SKU penetration in standalone stores.

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