INDUSTRY GUIDE

Competitive Benchmarking Tactics for Pharmaceutical Companies
Contents

1. Introduction
2. Chapter 1: What is Competitive Benchmarking?
3. Chapter 2: Deploying Competitive Intelligence (CI) in the Drug Development Process
   ○ Deploying CI at Each Step of the Drug Lifecycle
   ○ Value of Competitive Intelligence in the Drug Development Process
   ○ Traditional CI Methods vs. Social Media Listening
   ○ Ethics of It All?
4. Chapter 3: Key Listening Metrics for Pharmaceutical Companies
   ○ Share of Voice
   ○ Sentiment Analysis
   ○ Community Performance
5. Defining Your CI Strategy
   ○ Strategic Outline
   ○ Benchmarking Step-by-Step
About Digimind

Digimind is the leading social media monitoring and competitive intelligence software, designed for brands and agencies who want to accelerate digital transformation through an insights-driven approach. Recognised by Forrester and Gartner, Digimind’s best-in-breed technology transforms social and online data into actionable business insights, enabling marketers to effectively plan, execute, and analyse their marketing strategy.

Founded in 1998, Digimind is headquartered in New York, Paris, Singapore, and Rabat, serving more than 600 customers worldwide including LinkedIn, Sony, McCann Worldwide, and Lexus.

More information on [www.digimind.com](http://www.digimind.com)

More resources on [http://digimind.com/resources/](http://digimind.com/resources/)

Want to know more about Digimind and how our best in breed social listening and analytics technology can help boost your product development and launch strategies?

Contact Us: [marketing@digimind.com](mailto:marketing@digimind.com)
Introduction
Introduction

Competitive benchmarking has been a longstanding common practice across all business environments, including the pharmaceutical industry where the process for developing and releasing new drugs is complex and requires considerable effort and resources to research.

A well-implemented social media listening strategy incorporates the consumer’s voice into corporate benchmarking, which is too often siloed and focused primarily on internal processes. Actively monitoring customer reactions to competitor strategies versus yours, complements quantitative data with spontaneous and subjective feedback on how these brands are operating.

Take drug development for example. It is a prolonged process fraught with multiple risks, such as competitors producing similar products as well as drug failure. Being aware of social trends and insights in the competitive environment will add value to the development process.

Making Competitive Benchmarking More Customer-Centric With Social Listening

Simply put, production costs and pricing strategies aren’t the only factors – strategic innovation is key in becoming a more effective organization. With competitive intelligence (CI), pharma companies can gain insights into competitors’ strategies and gain an overview of relevant news, trends, and developments to fuel up their marketing, sales, merger, and acquisition strategies.

This eBook will answer the following questions:

- What is competitive benchmarking?
- How to deploy competitive intelligence and social media listening at each stage of the drug development process?
- How does social media listening benefit traditional competitive intelligence methods?
- What are the key listening metrics for pharma companies?
- How can companies apply social media intelligence in a benchmark?
What is Competitive Benchmarking?
What is Competitive Benchmarking?

Competitive benchmarking is the process of comparing your organization’s internal processes and performances against those of industry players, particularly direct competitors. Competitive benchmarking is often based on a number of metrics, and its primary objective is to inspire and improve internal practices to achieve higher quality results.

By comparing your company’s performance to your competitors’, you gain the distinct advantage of understanding best industry practices in the context of existing organizations of which these practices have been successfully implemented. In short, competitive benchmarking is comparing your company’s performance against the best in the industry, in order to make improvements internally, and externally.

Historically, pharmaceutical companies use competitive benchmarking to identify opportunities in their drug development cycle. These benchmarks are aimed to refine cost savings, lead time reduction, and quality improvements.
What is Competitive Benchmarking?

**Typical benchmark practices include a focus on:**

- Manufacturing and production shop floor performance
- Standard operating protocols (SOPs) revisions and amendments
- Market access evaluation
- Patient enrollment, engagement, and retention
- Drug pipeline management
- Resource management

But in order to effectively implement competitive benchmarking, competitive intelligence needs to be deployed to collect meaningful data to utilize further in internal and external strategies.

**Benchmarking enables companies to understand:**

- Industry Trends
- Market Risks
- Competitors
- Consumer Concerns
- Brand Reputation
- Best Practices
Customized social listening dashboard displaying competitive analysis and data for the pharma industry.
Deploying Competitive Intelligence (CI) in the Drug Development Process
Traditionally, competitive intelligence uses various sophisticated tools such as competitive landscapes, wargaming, competitor life cycle profiles, science mapping, comparative matrix development, and portfolio analysis. While these tools are still very much in use in the industry today, it is important to evolve with the technological advances of this era in order to have more accurate and precise information.

Typically, when dealing with CI, there have been 3 main sources that yield the most useful information:

- Employees
- Industry Experts
- Conferences, Congresses, and Trade Shows

Although these methods are reliable and rich in information, historically, they can also be a strain on time and resources. Therefore, by implementing a competitive intelligence software such as Digimind Intelligence, you can evaluate these three criteria in an efficient and reliable manner:

- Keep track of hires and hirees and internal/external movements within a company
- Identify key opinion leaders (KOLs) and analyze their impact through various measures such as interaction, audience reach, influential score, and popularity ranking
- Stay up to date with the latest announcements on upcoming conferences and trade shows through customizable source packs, with the ability to send real-time alerts to notify key team members

Key uses of CI for pharma companies.
Value of Competitive Intelligence in the Drug Development Process

The drug development process is split into three different stages:

- Development
- Release
- Post-Release

From the development of a new drug to its approval, it can take a company up to 15 years, and another 7-15 years after to further monitor product reputation, side-effects, misuses, and more. In this span of over 20 years, an enormous amount of investment is made, and many unforeseen events can occur that can negatively or positively affect the product. Competitive intelligence comes in handy to help anticipate and mitigate these risks.
**Development** The developmental phase can be further split into a multitude of stages in itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases and Challenges</th>
<th>Advantages of Competitive and Social Media Intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discovery and Design</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulation and design are two crucial issues to address</td>
<td>Identify potential diseases to target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is vital to formulate and identify a target, and to ensure a cohesive and executable design on a molecular, cellular, and genetic level</td>
<td>Detect future interests from competitors within the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Clinical and Clinical</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most crucial and resource-intensive phase</td>
<td>Use of social media as a potential recruitment tool is becoming much more lucrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can make or break a drug candidate</td>
<td>As recruitment to trials remains a perennial challenge, the usage of social media as a potential recruitment tool is becoming much more lucrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vital to locate clinical trial patients that fit the disease profile perfectly, and clinical trial sites that provide the most efficient support structure for the success of the trial</td>
<td><strong>By utilizing social media intelligence in a combination with competitive intelligence, it can help quickly identify potential trial patients</strong>¹ that fit in the epidemiologic, geographic and demographic criteria required</td>
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<td>Recruitment to trials remains a perennial challenge: <em>It is estimated that 60% of all clinical trials are delayed or canceled due to the lack of enrollment</em>, thus slowing the progress of valuable research and at times, resulting in research participants being exposed to risks, inconvenience, and burdens for no benefit at all</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the initial phase, formulation and design are two crucial issues to address. It is vital to formulate and identify a target and to ensure a cohesive and executable design on a molecular, cellular, and genetic level. In this phase, competitive intelligence can assist in identifying potential diseases to target, and if there are any future interests from competitors within the field.

Market research is a key component of the development stage, where companies gain insights into the medical field and assess any gaps they can fill. With so many types of customers and diseases, it is important for companies to identify suitable, profitable issues that have yet to be addressed by competitors. Additionally, if pharmaceutical companies choose to go the route of developing a new drug from scratch, they need to ensure that they have a clear and broad view of drugs that have already been out in the market so that they do not reinvent the wheel. If not, the choice of developing a biosimilar or generic drug can cut costs significantly and hasten the development process.
In this stage, it is essential for pharmaceutical companies to have real-time alerts of scientific breakthroughs and updates in local legislation to ensure a smooth release of new products. Also, in order to prepare and have an effective launch, monitoring and keeping track of competitors that have previously launched a similar product can provide immense knowledge. Examine what works well for them and what didn’t, and compare with your current strategic overview and make adjustments accordingly.

When dealing with a market that’s as divisive and emotionally driven as the pharma industry, customers’ outlook, needs, and desires are always shifting. As a result, companies’ messaging will adapt to such trends. It is important to stay adaptive, by listening to the market and keep your message flexible.

Another vital area in which competitive intelligence can be of use during the pre-launch phase, is through modeling and predictability. By utilizing CI, we can analyze past events and predict the most likely outcomes for competitor scenarios. This ties with wargaming and can prepare a company for unanticipated circumstances and mitigate potential damages.
Post-Launch

Once a product has been approved and commercialized for the market, this brings forth a myriad of new actions to perform. In order to upkeep a consistent, positive presence on the market after a successful product launch, it is important for companies to continue monitoring social media and implementing competitive intelligence to monitor product reputation, patient engagement, side-effects, potential crises as well as customer feedback.

Here are the critical ways competitive intelligence fits into the post-launch stage of a drug product launch.

Pharmacovigilance/Drug Safety Monitoring: As of now, this does not seem to be fully embraced by the industry due to the complex regulatory nature that is shrouded around this subject, as well as perceived risks and inconveniences. Even though this is the case, as patients are becoming more expressive and open to projecting their concerns on social media and in forums, pharmacovigilance (PV) will eventually need to expand to the social platforms. By monitoring social media for potential adverse effects, a company can resolve the issue before it becomes an unwarranted crisis. Furthermore, monitoring patient outlook and apprehension for a rival drug, can go a long way in helping companies develop effective pharmacovigilance that can be applied to the value of their own drug products.
Social listening charts displaying distribution of healthcare related discussions in Asia Pacific, and the United States.
Post-Lauch

**Analyze Key Performance Indicators:** Once your product launch goes live, it will be competing to obtain market shares - like every other product in a similar field. Therefore you should compare and analyze:

- Your win and loss rates against competitors and see what has changed post-launch.
- Your sales results to see how your success rate against competitors has altered

**Tracking Your Competition:** While competitive tracking should technically be deployed in the entirety of the developmental phases, it is especially vital post-launch. Keeping a watchful eye on your competitors’ actions, can help you maintain a competitive advantage. Analyze what your competitors are saying about your product and see if there is any response to it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Traditional CI Methods</th>
<th>Social Media Listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry Dynamics</td>
<td>- Porter’s five forces&lt;br&gt;- SWOT analysis&lt;br&gt;- Value chain analysis&lt;br&gt;- Analysis of past M&amp;As&lt;br&gt;- Four Corner’s analysis</td>
<td>- Social network intelligence: analyzing real-time reactions across industry players&lt;br&gt;- Sentiment analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Landscape</td>
<td>- Wargaming and game theory analysis&lt;br&gt;- Benchmarking&lt;br&gt;- Cost structure comparison&lt;br&gt;- Profiling</td>
<td>- Primary research&lt;br&gt;- Real-time competitive intelligence: tracking revenue, growth, product usage, announcements, mentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend Predictions</td>
<td>- Trend interaction analysis&lt;br&gt;- Scenario planning&lt;br&gt;- Competitive trend exposure (benchmarking)</td>
<td>- Primary research&lt;br&gt;- Audience intelligence: analyzing followers and fans for new insights and innovations&lt;br&gt;- Early trend monitoring and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity/Market Sizing</td>
<td>- Market sizing via triangulation&lt;br&gt;- Estimation of the customer base (via benchmarking)&lt;br&gt;- Marketing penetration analysis</td>
<td>- Live testing: the ability for direct feedback from users&lt;br&gt;- Data mining: utilizing text analytics to estimate market sizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Insights</td>
<td>- Focus groups&lt;br&gt;- Interviews&lt;br&gt;- Consumer behavior observation&lt;br&gt;- Conferences&lt;br&gt;- Surveys</td>
<td>- Primary research through social media platforms&lt;br&gt;- Influencer Intelligence: Identify KOLs for targeting&lt;br&gt;- Audience generalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A 2010 study by Kietzmann & Angell\(^2\) revealed that social media users have serious concerns about how the content and information they post is being used by secondary firms as a source for data mining and monitoring. This has led to companies’ growing cautiousness towards the potential repercussions of monitoring social media, namely:

- Social media users might become more cautious, which can lead to more closed social media profiles and platforms and a narrower online data pool as a result.
- Secondly, companies that monitor social media conversations may be perceived negatively by consumers who are strongly against such activities. One example is the 2016 Cambridge Analytica data breach scandal, which saw an increase to 44% of users viewing Facebook much more negatively.\(^3\)

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Ethics of It All?

Naturally, when dealing with competitive and social media intelligence within the pharma and healthcare space, different methods can potentially have legal and ethical implications. Depending on the country and region, the legislation for industrial espionage can vary quite a bit. When handling patient health information (PHI), it is always wise to be wary of the information that is being collected, and ensure that the data is well kept and not abused in any way, even if it is all publicly obtained information.

On the contrary, although social media is known to have a broad range of audiences that include HCPs to patients, a separate entity also exists online: social networking communities solely for physicians and practitioners of medicine. Created initially as a safe and secure place for licensed physicians to have discussions related to medicine and health, it has quickly become a target for other purposes. These sites generate revenue by selling access to their large networks of physician-users to clients that include global pharma companies, market research and consulting firms, hedge funds and other investors. In exchange for a fee, these clients are offered a variety of tools to monitor, analyze, and solicit physicians' opinions.

Utilizing social media as a tool for competitive intelligence has great advantages, especially in terms of enhancing traditional CI methods. However, it is equally important to balance the acquiring of valuable data, with complying with local regulations, as well as engaging consumers in a non-intrusive manner, especially on something as emotive as healthcare.
Key Listening Metrics for Pharma Companies
Share of Voice

Share of voice is one of the most useful metrics offered by social listening platforms like Digimind Social for gaining a quick, concise understanding of brand interest and how your company’s share of conversation stacks up against competitors. There are a number of methods for viewing share of voice, including percentage share of voice, audience potential, and interest over time.

Social listening chart comparing the share of voice for pharmaceutical companies.
Share of Voice

Case Study: Fuelling R&D Strategies Through Detecting Innovative Startups

Due to low R&D productivity and the highly competitive nature of the market, a multinational pharmaceutical manufacturer needed to detect innovative start-ups that could feed its R&D pipeline and external acquisition strategy.

Using Digimind Intelligence, the company established a scientific watch to monitor pre-clinical and clinical deposits, amongst others. In doing so, the company established an external R&D strategy, which then enabled it to venture into high-performance molecules and preserve its competitive advantage.
Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) are a norm in the pharma industry as they facilitate innovation as well as unlock synergies to cut costs and increase profits. With an overview of competitors’ performance in the medical field, businesses can identify brands or trends that are greatly talked about by consumers, allowing insights into how fellow companies are performing. Such insights can help pharma companies to gain a better understanding of their competitors and whether they are suitable to become a partner in medicine!
Sentiment Analysis

With a social media listening tool, companies can monitor and benchmark the following:

- **Public perception**: Compare the average sentiment of your brand’s mentions to your competitors’. While it is incredibly important to understand what consumers, the media, and influencers are saying about a brand, it is equally significant to understand the general sentiment of discussions around your market as a whole.

- **Average sentiment of brands, campaigns, and drugs**: During the release and post-release stages, it is important for companies to be kept abreast of relevant social insights in order to gain an understanding of the product’s performance.

- **Product reputation, side-effects, potential crises, and customer feedback**: It is not only crucial for crisis management, but also further research and development. In addition, Digimind's social media listening platform allows users to monitor online channels for particularly high negative sentiment, and set up an alert system if it surpasses a designated threshold.
Sentiment Analysis

Social listening charts comparing public sentiments around pharmaceutical brands.
A biopharmaceutical company utilized Digimind to raise awareness about unknown pathologies and analyze the impact of its communications strategy.

Through social media listening, the company was able to:

- **Identify speaking opportunities, new KOLs, and competitors’ campaigns**
- **Obtain quick visualizations of news and press releases, social media coverage, and sentiment analysis to gauge the public’s perception**
- **Effectively analyze key opportunities, modify strategies, and measure their campaigns’ effectiveness in real time**
- **Boost outreach and ROI**
Understanding how your competitors’ social communities are performing is an invaluable tool for comparing content strategies, market share of voice, brand interest, and growth rates. This is also helpful for when developing KPIs and metrics to gauge the company’s success internally and externally.

According to the Washington Post, pharma companies are spending more on marketing efforts than research. The budget allocated to marketing efforts has skyrocketed over the past 20 years and it has paid off significantly. Marketing efforts have allowed companies to engage with their target audience and increase product awareness.

Marketing in the pharma industry continues to be of growing importance and social listening can serve as a great tool to fuel marketing strategies. With an abundance of social data, companies can gain insights from competitors’ content with impressive engagement levels and stay away from those that do not perform.

As of January 2019, approximately 3.484 billion individuals around the world are using social media - that’s 45% of the global population, according to We Are Social and Hootsuite. With such an incredible wealth of knowledge and insights available to brands on social media, the value of social data is apparent.

5. Ana Swanson. Washington Post. Big pharmaceutical companies are spending far more on marketing than research. 11 February 2019.
A historical leader in the therapeutics sector was facing intense competitive pressure. The only way to maintain an advantage was by leveraging collective intelligence across all competitors.

Through Digimind, this company was able to obtain an overview of mentions such as consumer feedback and branding messages from competitors. This allowed them to relook existing strategies and improve on subsequent ones.

The company also re-packaged its product positioning and continued to stand out in the market. Furthermore, with these insights, their sales representatives became better integrated into the collective intelligence process.
Defining Your CI Strategy
This is a basic outline of a competitive benchmarking strategy, however every organization is different. There's no catch-all formula for success.

Competitive benchmarking is about collecting, analyzing, and implementing actionable data into your strategies.

At the outset of your competitive benchmark, it's important to think of what internal operations or processes you'd like to improve upon.

After defining your objectives, consider which industry players you want to stack up against. Are they direct competitors? Who are you benchmarking your brand against and why?

Begin collecting and organizing data. You can set up dashboards within Digimind to collect performance data in real-time and view it side by side next to your selected competitors.

Finally, consider implementing best industry practices into your organization's strategies. Tread lightly, however - implementing new strategies can be more costly than improving current processes.

Next, analyze and compare. What's working for who? How can your organization create tangible results with the collected data?
# Benchmarking: Step-by-Step

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Key Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Step 1 | Outline Strategy         | - Which industry players will be monitored?  
- Which key metrics are to be analyzed?  
- What aspect of our strategy needs improvement? | Marketing  
Executives  
Client Services |
| Step 2 | Collect Data             | - What type of data are we interested in?  
- Which data sources are most relevant? | Marketing  
Analysts |
| Step 3 | Analyze Data             | - What are the implications of this data?  
- Where is there room for improvement?  
- What are we currently doing well?  
- Have these trends been consistent over time? | Analysts  
Marketing |
| Step 4 | Define Managerial        | - What does my manager need to know?  
- How can I present this data in a concise manner?  
- What are the key takeaways from this study? | Marketing  
Executives  
Directors |
Our Resources

On optimizing your digital analytics and product strategies:

Bridging Gaps in Pharmacovigilance
Download here

How to Benchmark Your Brand with Social Intelligence
Download here

On best practices and key trends for the industry on social media:

Dissecting Opportunities for Asia Pacific’s Pharmaceutical & Healthcare Industry
Download here

An Insight into the US Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Industry on Social Media
Download here
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