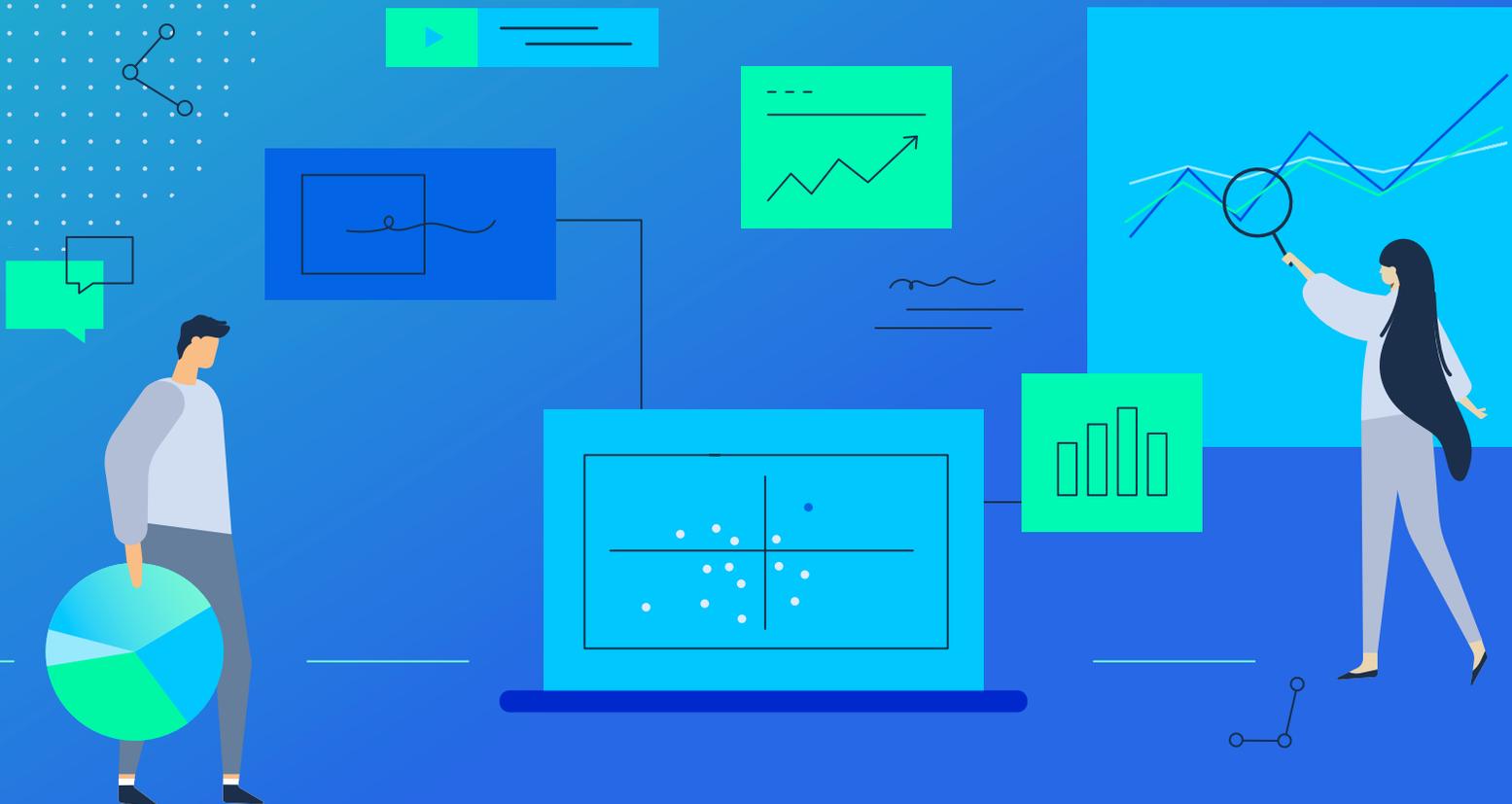# Competitive analysis with UserTesting

Understand competitive differentiators and areas of opportunity

Introduction

To stay ahead of the pack, brands often analyze the competition's strengths and weaknesses to devise winning strategies.

By doing this, they can better understand:

☑ How their products and experiences compare, i.e. how is it better or worse than the competition

☑ Ideas for new products or improvements to an existing experience

☑ Problems with their current experience that they didn't know about

☑ What is compelling about competitors across different dimensions, including product, branding and messaging, and others

This guidebook provides ideas for how UserTesting can help you better understand your competitive differentiators as well as identify areas of opportunity.
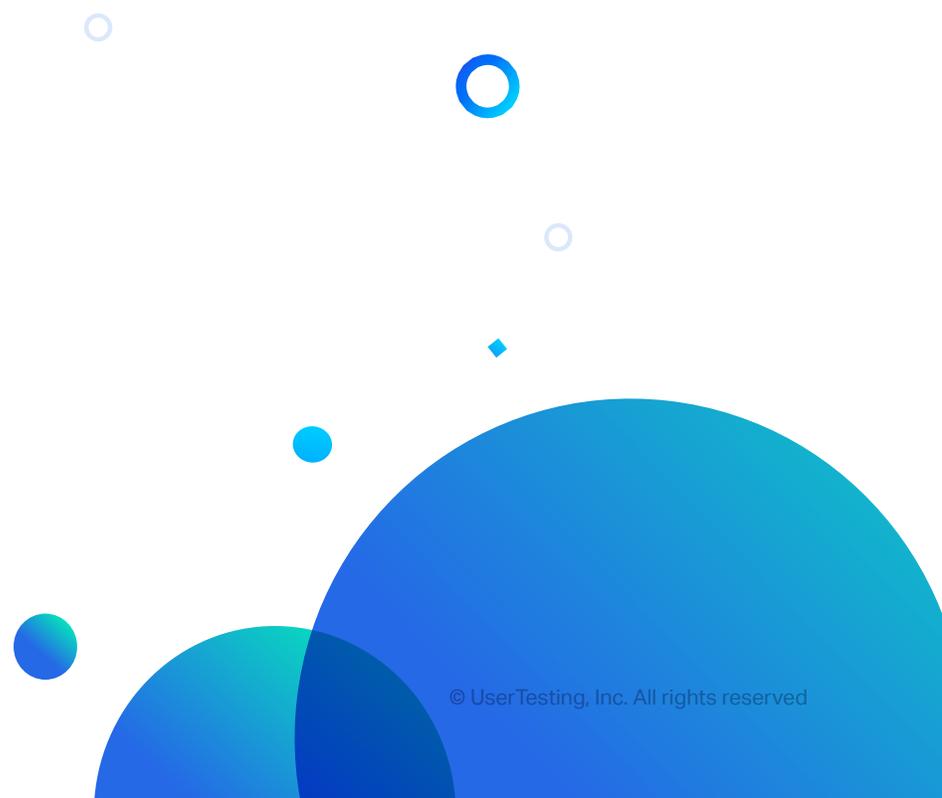
Determine: Who is "the competition?"

There are many ways to define and assess "the competition." Your competition comes in many shapes and sizes, so don't limit testing to only your direct competitors.

Comparable: Test the website or app of another company that's doing something similar but isn't a direct competitor.

Aspirational: Test the experiences of best-in-breed brands. Even if they aren't direct competitors or even in your competitive set, you can learn what makes them stand out from the crowd.

Unknown: Ask test participants to search for a product or solution in your industry or to meet a specified need and see who else they turn to. Discover fast-moving newcomers that you may not have known about (but that you should start monitoring!)

Non-competitors: Find an aspect of a site or app you love—even if it has nothing to do with your company—and see whether it may be a good fit for your users. You'd be surprised how often best-loved features jump over to new categories and industries!

Determine: Who will you target?

You can test with your known customers, or open up your targeting to determine if there are additional audiences you should be pursuing.

Known customers: Use My Recruit to send tests to customers in your database, or use screeners to ensure you match with precisely the people who know and use your brand or match your target personas. Send them to your competitors' or other brands' websites or apps to see what they prefer or dislike.

Open it up: Get feedback from different consumer or user segments to understand similarities and differences. Or, you can even conduct interviews to better understand or confirm who you should be targeting— you might be surprised what you discover!

covermymeds®

CoverMyMeds was created more than a decade ago to resolve a major patient pain point: the process of securing prescription prior authorizations. The company provides solutions to securely and electronically transmit prior authorization (PA) requests, the process by which health plans, doctors and pharmacists manage approvals and fulfillment of prescriptions.

The company wanted to ensure that patient needs were taken into account as they considered new product concepts. The team turned to Live Conversation to conduct discovery interviews to learn more about customer needs.

When they started their interviews, the team hadn't completely identified the precise persona that they should be engaging. Frank Rosile, UX Designer, says, "We started very broad. It didn't start out with a format or much of a script. It was a generative process where we sought to continue building on learnings as we talked to more people.

"We wrote screeners that helped us find people who managed prescriptions, but at the time, we didn't even know if that was the same person who would actually be taking the medication [versus just picking it up]. So we created screeners that would help us understand the two groups, that the person picking up the prescription either was or was not the person also taking the medication."

"We learned it's kind of both," recalls Rosile. "The people performing the activity of picking up a prescription order usually have a prescription in the bag for themselves, but then they're also picking up prescriptions for a member of their household, such as their children, spouse or even their parents. So they're playing the role of a caregiver— picking up prescriptions for multiple parties."

Read the full case study

" **We started very broad...It was a generative process where we sought to continue building on learnings as we talked to more people.**"

- Frank Rosile, UX Designer
CoverMyMeds

Conduct an interview using Live Conversation

It can be helpful to have an open, freeform conversation with customers about their perceptions of the competition— be it the competitive landscape of your product category or one specific competitor.

Do this even before bringing up your product. In fact, you don't even have to bring up your product if you are focused on learning about the competition. Additionally, not disclosing the company you represent can help ensure honest and unbiased feedback from customers. You're not comparing your product against the competition; you're really just trying to learn as much as you can about the competition.

First, segment the audience and identify the one(s) you want to speak with. Maybe they are or aren't familiar with your brand or your competitors. Maybe they are a power user in your product category and are equipped to provide very specific and knowledgeable feedback.

Some sample conversation starters could include:

- How did you hear about the product?
- What process did you use to pick this product over the competition?
- What other products were you interested in purchasing?
- Why did you select this one over others?
- Why did you choose this product?
- Is it worth more or less than X product?
- What do you like about the product/solution you have?
- What do you wish that this product/solution was better at?
- How satisfied are you with customer support and working with the company?

Get interview tips and tricks using our guide.

Do a thorough analysis of a competitor using unmoderated testing

Just as you would structure and conduct a test about your brand's products and experiences, you can do the same for one or more competitors. One idea: you can Create Similar Test, using a test plan you used for your own brand, and swap in your competitor's website, app or other digital properties.

> Customers can view the UserTesting University tutorial on how to create a similar test from an existing test.

Some of the tasks or questions that you'll want to ask a test participant about a competitor can include:

- How unfavorable (1) or favorable is (5) your attitude towards [brand name]?
- How inconsistent (1) or consistent (5) is [brand name]?
- How ordinary (1) or unique (5) is [brand name]?
- How difficult (1) or easy (5) is it to recognize [brand name]?
- If [brand name] were a person, how would you describe its personality?
- What are your initial impressions of this website?
- Rating scales on relevant dimensions, including product/website attractiveness, trustworthiness, simplicity in design and usability, and others
- Tasks that the test participant should complete, with questions on how easy or difficult it was to complete the task

You may want to include Metrics questions when building out your test plan, such as Multiple Choice or Rating Scale, to secure quantitative data alongside the qualitative feedback. For example you could include Rating Scale questions asking the test participant to rate you and your competitor on specific dimensions.

| 1 | **Task** | Duplicate | Delete | ✛ |
| | Go to www.MyBrand.com. When you see the website, move on to the next task. | | | |

| 2 | **Verbal Response** | Duplicate | Delete | ✛ |
| | Without leaving the homepage, what are your initial impressions of the MyBrand website? Explain your answer. | | | |

| 3 | **Task** | Duplicate | Delete | ✛ |
| | Think of something that you might want to buy on this website and describe it out loud. When you've decided on an item, move on to the next task. | | | |

| 4 | **Task** | Duplicate | Delete | ✛ |
| | Take as much time as you need to find what you just described or the closest substitute. Move on to the next task when you're done. | | | |

| 5 | **Rating Scale Task** | Duplicate | Delete | ✛ |
| | The website is easy to use. Explain your answer. | | | |

| 6 | **Rating Scale Task** | Duplicate | Delete | ✛ |
| | It is easy to navigate within the website. Explain your answer. | | | |

| 7 | **Task** | Duplicate | Delete | ✛ |
| | Go to www.CompetitorBrandcom. When you see the website, move on to the next task. | | | |

| 8 | **Verbal Response** | Duplicate | Delete | ✛ |
| | Without leaving the homepage, what are your initial impressions of the CompetitorBrand website? Explain your answer. | | | |

When the tests are completed, you can use the Metrics tab to view the responses. The charts help you see patterns or outliers so that you can decide where to spend your time watching video clips.

8 Rating Scale Question

▶ Watch Task 8 28:06

I find the website to be attractive. Explain your answer.

3 Participants
jasonkatz8 ▶ 1:06
Knor0009 ▶ 2:12
walt_ice ▶ 7:41

Number of Participants

1. Strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. Strongly agree

Learn more about Metrics in our Knowledgebase. Customers can watch educational content about Using Metrics in UserTesting University.

Conduct a "bake-off"

The term "bake-off" refers to a competition where cooks compete head-to-head – perhaps in front of an audience. In the business world, the metaphor refers to an effort by a company to compare and select from competing vendors.

You can conduct a smaller-range bake-off when doing testing— pitting your brand, designs, products or messaging against those of your competitors for a side-by-side comparison. This will help you better understand how your experiences measure up and helps ensure you are saying, sharing, showing and providing exactly what your customers expect in order to win their business.

When doing this, you'll want to replicate tasks and questions across two or more brands to understand test participants' online behaviors and how they rate their experiences across multiple brands' digital properties. You may also want to add tasks and questions at the end that ask the test participant to identify which experience they preferred and to explain why.

Competitive analysis in the UserTesting platform

Here are some useful features to help you conduct competitive analysis.

1. Test templates

Those interested in saving time or who are less familiar with conducting competitive analysis can use our ready-to-use Competitor Website Study or Competitor App Study templates when creating a test from scratch.

Popular Study Templates

Evaluating Designs and Ideas

How do these designs compare? Which version do people prefer?
Preference Study

Is this product or feature idea valuable?
Single Page Concept Study

Is the prototype easy to understand and use?
Prototype Evaluation Study

What is working well and what isn't in our current experience?
UX Assessment Website Study
UX Assessment App Study

Uncovering Impressions and Attitudes

How do people who are familiar with our brand perceive it?
Brand Perception Website Study
Brand Perception App Study

What are people's first impressions of our experience?
First Impressions Website Study
First Impressions App Study

Do new users understand the value of our product, service, or experience?
Understanding Value Proposition Website Study
Understanding Value Proposition App Study

How do we stack up against competitors? Which experience do people prefer?
Competitor Website Study
Competitor App Study

When the template is selected, you'll see tasks and questions automatically inserted into your test plan; however, you'll still want to make edits to customize the test plan itself as well as adjust your audience targeting before you launch the test.

Specifically, here are some things you'll want to keep in mind when using the template:

- You have the opportunity to compare two website experiences, so you'll want to insert a competitor's website as well as either your website or a 2nd competitor's website.
- If you don't want to do a side-by-side comparison, you can customize the test plan by editing or removing questions according to your interests and needs.

> Learn more about our researcher-designed templates in our Knowledgebase. Customers can also view the UserTesting University tutorial on using templates.

2. Balanced Comparison

When comparing two things, the order in which those alternatives are presented can sometimes influence a participant's reactions, creating a subtle bias within a test. The Balanced Comparison feature was designed to reduce the risk of that bias.

When you use Balanced Comparison, you create two sections in your study, part A and part B. The order in which participants see the two parts is automatically alternated: the first participant will see option A first and B second, the next will see option B first and option A second, and so on. This balances any biases created by the order in which the two alternates are presented, such as two competitor experiences on which you are gathering feedback.

> Visit our Knowledgebase for more information on using Balanced Comparison. Customers can also view the UserTesting University tutorial on this topic.

3. Enhanced Metrics

Premium subscription customers have access to Enhanced Metrics, which display behavioral data using click paths and also share other high level measurements, like time spent on each task. If you set up your test with tasks that ask the test participant to go through a similar flow across different brands' web experiences (desktop-only), you'll be able to see how many and which webpages each tester visited in their attempt to complete that task.

For example, let's say you want to understand how easy it is for a customer to find and select an item on your site as compared to other competitors in your industry. You can create this task and replicate it across the competitors you want to evaluate. Once tests are completed, you would be able to view Metrics and see the click paths across the different brands to see which one took longer or required more steps. You could then view the video clips associated with areas of interest, to better understand the behavior, motivations or challenges in each case.
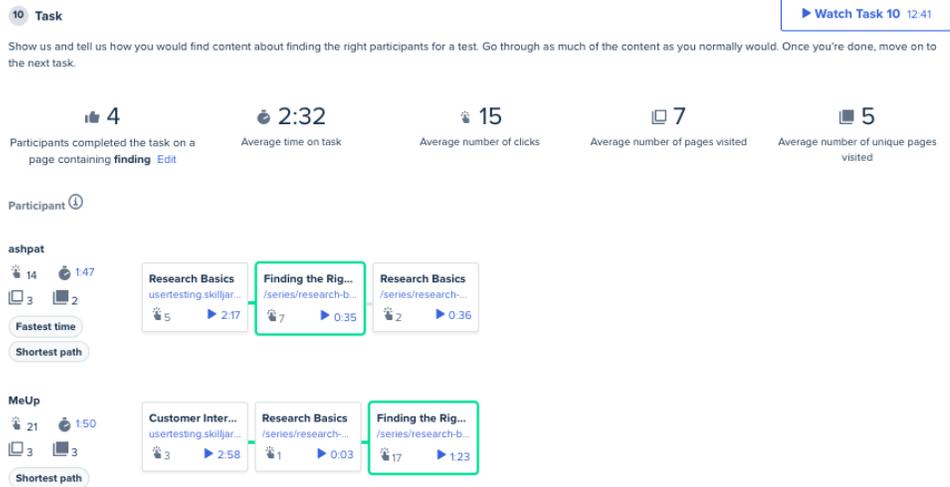
You can also set a success metric, like a webpage or pages that contain a certain phrase, in order to immediately understand things like:

- Did the user visit a page we had in mind? Were they successful in completing the task?
- At what point in trying to complete the task did they visit this page?
- Once they hit the page in mind, did they realize it and indicate they had completed the task?

Learn more about Enhanced Metrics in our Knowledgebase.

4. Competitive Pulse, a full service research offering

Customers seeking full service support can engage the UserTesting Professional Services team. The Competitive Pulse package provides quarterly or bi-annual competitive studies on your experience and up to three of your competitors so that you identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities to differentiate, and continue monitoring to maintain your edge.

A large US wireless provider needed to understand how their web experience compared with those of major competitors. They turned to UserTesting, selecting the Competitive Pulse package to benchmark their web experience on a quarterly basis. They identified the major competitors they wanted to track and also the distinct pages on their websites that they wanted to focus on.

Of the various insights that were uncovered, the wireless provider made a major discovery about their plans page that made it difficult for customers to understand and select their preferred option.

Read the full case study

Know thy competitors – but proceed with prudence

Finally, it's worth mentioning that there are many differing schools of thought regarding how much brands should invest in monitoring the competition. Some will say that tracking the competition keeps you hungry and eager to continually improve in order to win. Others take the other extreme, saying that over-indexing on competitive intelligence can be myopic and in fact deter true innovation that optimally improves customers' lives.

Understanding the competition doesn't necessarily mean that you follow in the same steps. In fact, Jack Ma, co-founder of tech conglomerate Alibaba Group, has been quoted as saying, "You should learn from your competitor, but never copy. Copy and you die." (Interestingly, he's also been quoted as saying, "Forget about your competitors. Just focus on your customers.")

The point is: you must have access to data and insights first—whatever you determine is relevant and important — to then make fast, informed decisions when determining next steps, allocating resources and generating your business' winning strategy.

About UserTesting

UserTesting is an on-demand human insight platform that quickly gives companies a first-person understanding of how their target audience behaves throughout any experience and why. To learn more, visit www.usertesting.com.

User Testing®

HEADQUARTERS
144 Townsend St.
San Francisco, CA 94107

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UserTesting.com
1-888-877-1882