

Use Case Story:

# Competitor Research Finds Hard Seltzer Is Surging Ahead

## 01

# Background

Your brand might be performing well, but merely analyzing your own metrics won't give you the full picture. In short, you should be able to answer this question: how is your brand performing in comparison to others in your market?

The difficulty in answering this question is twofold. First of all, what should you be measuring? Unless your competitor is publicly-owned, you won't be able to access earnings reports or financial data. In other words, news about your competitors' financial status is often heard "through the grapevine." More often than not, it's a complete mystery. **However, brand image, especially in the digital world, has become increasingly indicative of popularity and performance.** While this is excellent news for competitor research, herein lies the second problem. How exactly can you measure brand image, digital presence, and audience preferences?

Fortunately, social intelligence makes competitor research intuitive and straightforward. Social monitoring programs analyze data from (1) your competitors' owned accounts (i.e., official company profiles) and (2) organic conversations and engagement with their brand or products. In this case study, we walk you through a real-life example of competitor research in the beverage industry.

## 02

# The Challenge

Our client, a corporation with numerous subsidiaries in the beverage industry, wanted to expand into the beer or alcoholic seltzer markets. They understood the influence of social media on purchasing behaviors and consumer attitudes. Therefore, before deciding on a new line of products, the team wanted to see how digital audiences engaged with alcoholic beverages online. They knew that, compared to other social intelligence tools, Synthesio pulled data from the largest number of sources around the Internet. They wanted to know which brands or products were gaining the most traction, why, and whether there was a gap in the market that they could fill.



## Step 1: Benchmark Share of Voice and Growth Rate

The best way to get a complete look at how other companies are performing is to use a competitive analysis dashboard. This dashboard uses unique KPIs to measure how multiple brands or products stack up. For this competitor research study, the team looked at English language content related to six alcoholic beverage brands.

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### Beer

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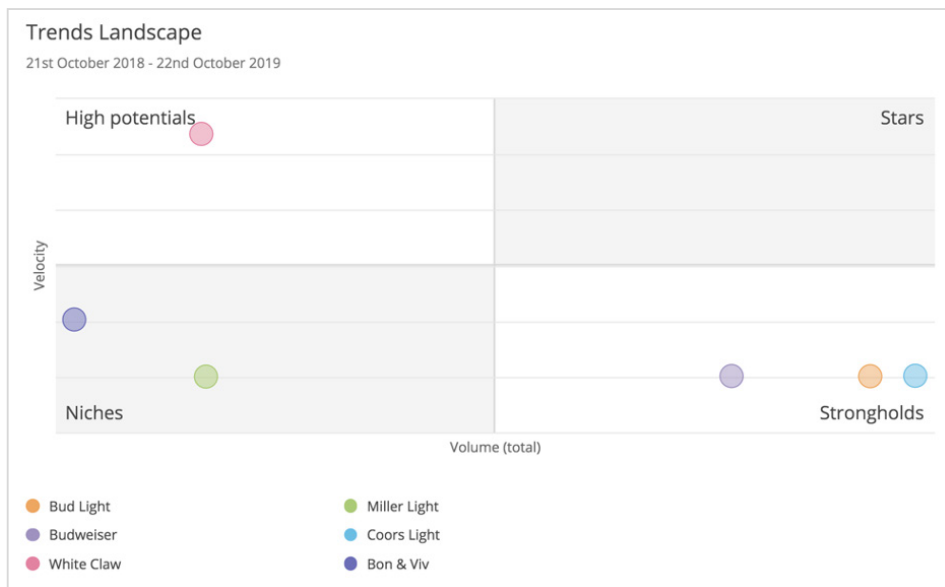
### Alcoholic Seltzer

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The following trends landscape matrix measures digital conversations in two dimensions. The X-axis measures the overall volume of mentions, while the Y-axis shows how quickly conversations about the topic are growing.



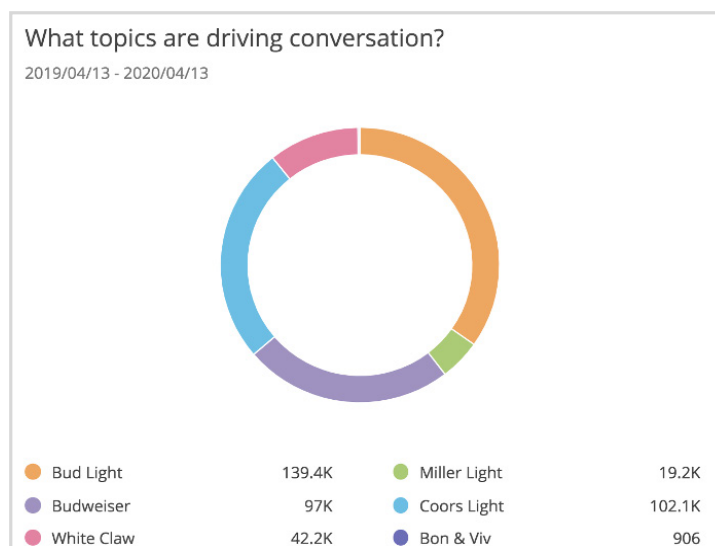


Longstanding beers like Coors Light, Bud Light, and Budweiser demonstrated the highest numbers of mentions on the Internet. However, when topics exhibit high conversation volumes, growth over time can be low. We call these “strongholds.”

Perhaps more interestingly, White Claw had the highest velocity, or growth, in online conversations. Similarly, Bon & Viv, another hard seltzer brand, exhibits high growth rates despite lower total volumes than the big beer brands.

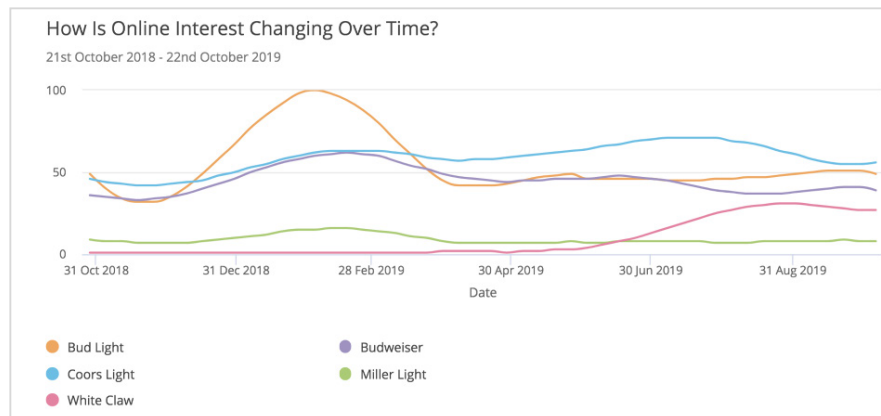
**This matrix helped our client to understand and visualize the relationship between beer brands and hard seltzer brands.** Because hard seltzer has only recently become popular, conversation volumes are much lower than those of longstanding beer brands. However, online content about alcoholic seltzer is growing at a much faster rate.

Another feature of our dashboard showed similar results in the number of online discussions about these brands and products, with Bud Light and Coors Light leading the way.

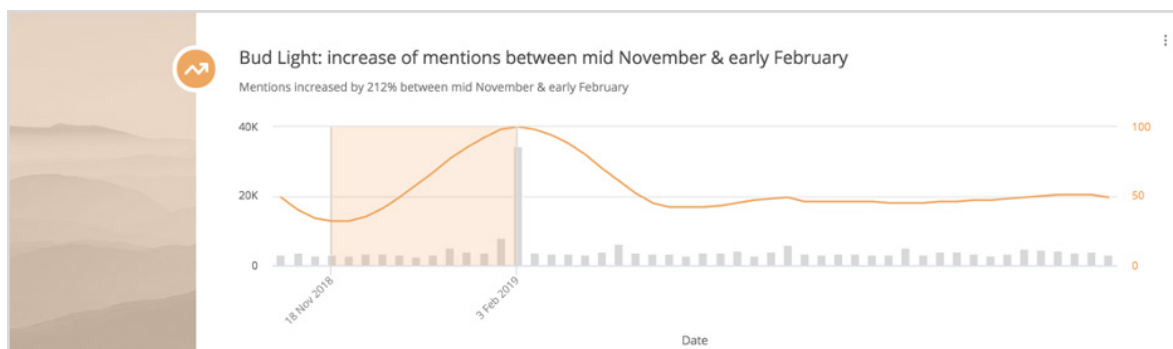


## Step 2: Measure Audience Interest Over Time

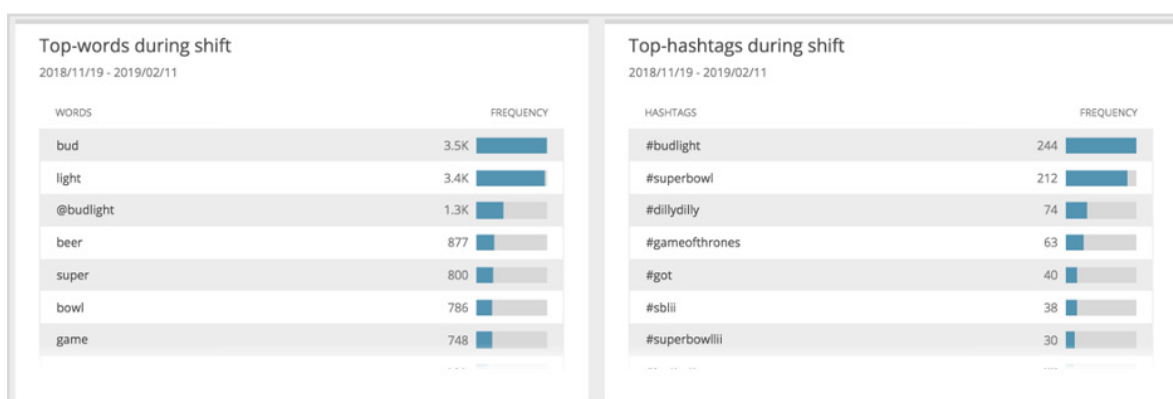
Our competitive analysis dashboard also measured how online interest has changed between the summers of 2018 and 2019.



Our client's team was immediately intrigued about the cause behind Bud Light's sudden increase of interest in early 2019. The dashboard revealed that mention of the beer doubled between mid-November and early February.

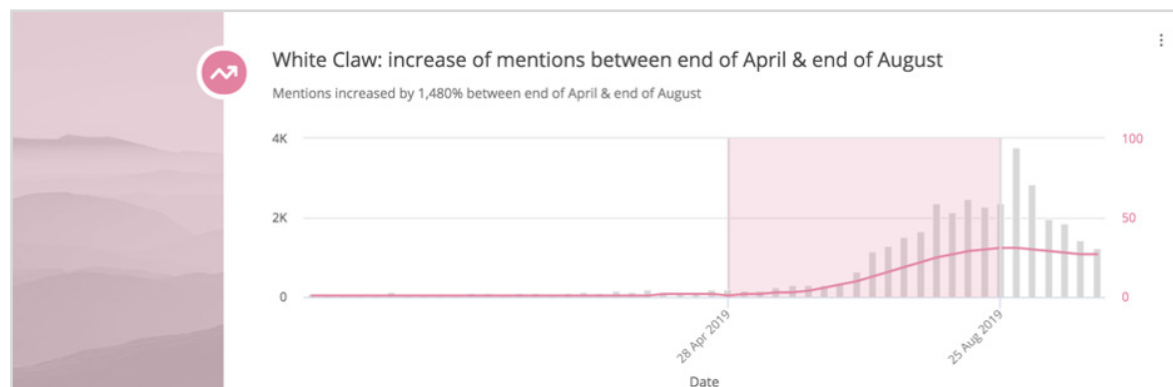


To get a macro look at the cause behind it, we first examined the top words and hashtags during this period. The terms "*super*," "*bowl*," and *#gameofthrones* and *#GoT* revealed the reason why. In February 2019, Bud Light ran a [Super Bowl](#) ad that featured a crossover with the popular Game of Thrones universe.



Although the ad captured a great deal of attention, the overall interest in Bud Light remained steady during the year. Similarly, the trend lines of Budweiser and Miller Light have been relatively stable.

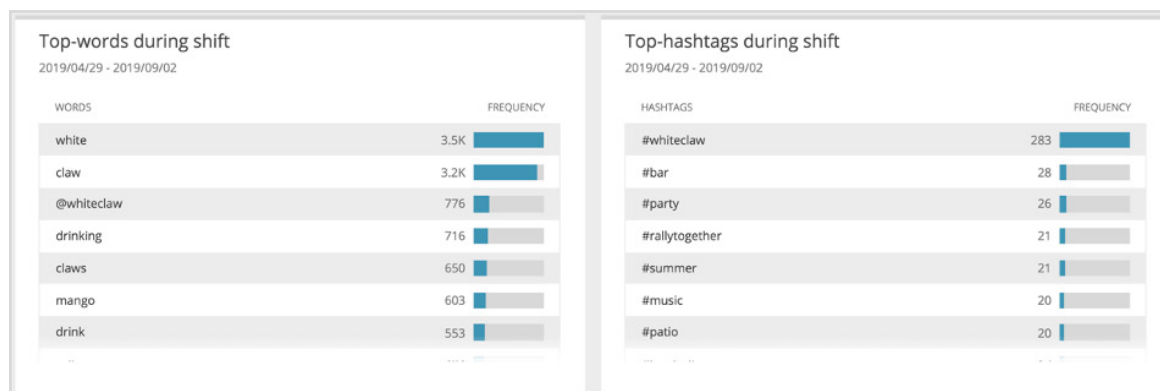
**However, the team saw a different story with White Claw, which sustained its lift in conversation.**



White claw benefitted from an audience of young adults that quickly created memes about the drink. Some people liked it, some didn't, and some didn't understand why this product shot to stardom out of nowhere. Regardless, it was the star of humorous memes, forum threads, articles, and more.

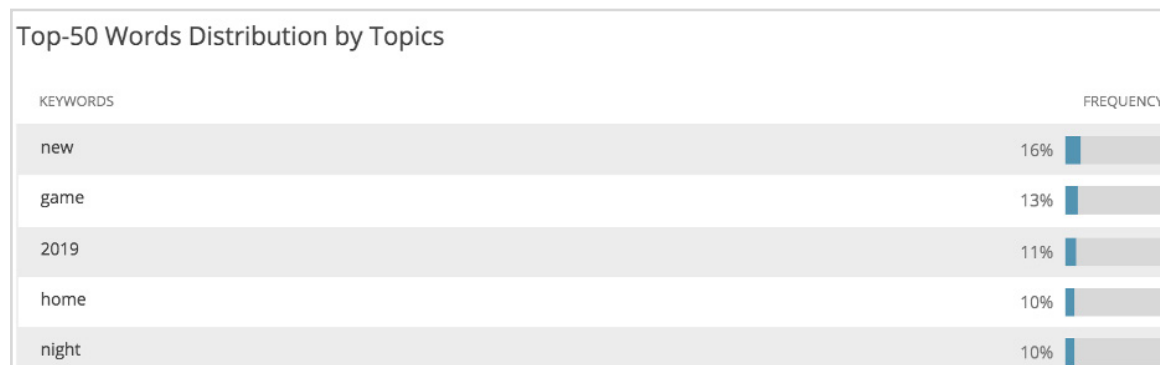


Our dashboard also found that “mango” was a top word about White Claw during this period, suggesting its popularity with consumers.



Furthermore, top hashtags around White Claw, such as #bar, #party, and #summer, revolve mostly around social events.

In contrast, the overall top words in this competitor research study revealed a sports-centric audience that frequently uses words like “game,” “season,” and “field” alongside these beverages. **Therefore, in the beverage market, White Claw has a unique appeal to audiences who may not be sports fans.**



## Step 3: Identify Shared Audiences With Competitor Research

Our client also paid particular attention to the topic co-mentions of these alcohol brands. Co-mentions analyze the frequency with which audiences speak of two topics, or two products, together. **Two products with high co-mention rates may be indicative of a shared consumer base.** For example, online users might be comparing these two products with each other or praising both drinks in one post.

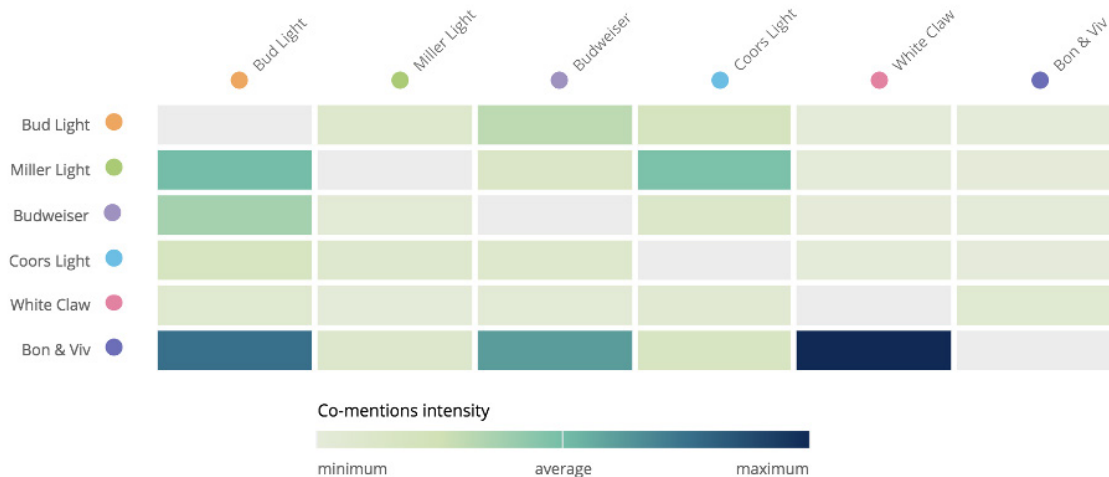
The team found that White Claw is often mentioned together with Bon & Viv rather than the other beer brands. This finding revealed that audiences interested in hard seltzer are not talking about or looking for beer products. The two markets are distinct from one another.





## Which Topics Tend To Be Mentioned At The Same Time?

21st October 2018 - 22nd October 2019



However, Bon & Viv is also mentioned often with Bud Light. This raised some questions for our client. To understand this co-mention, the team clicked into the data point. The contextual report revealed that the higher rate of co-mentions was connected to Bon & Viv and Bud Light's shared parent company: Anheuser-Busch InBev. Furthermore, news about the launch of Bud Light Seltzer caught the attention of the press and social media users alike.



**Darren Rovell** ✓

@darrenrovell



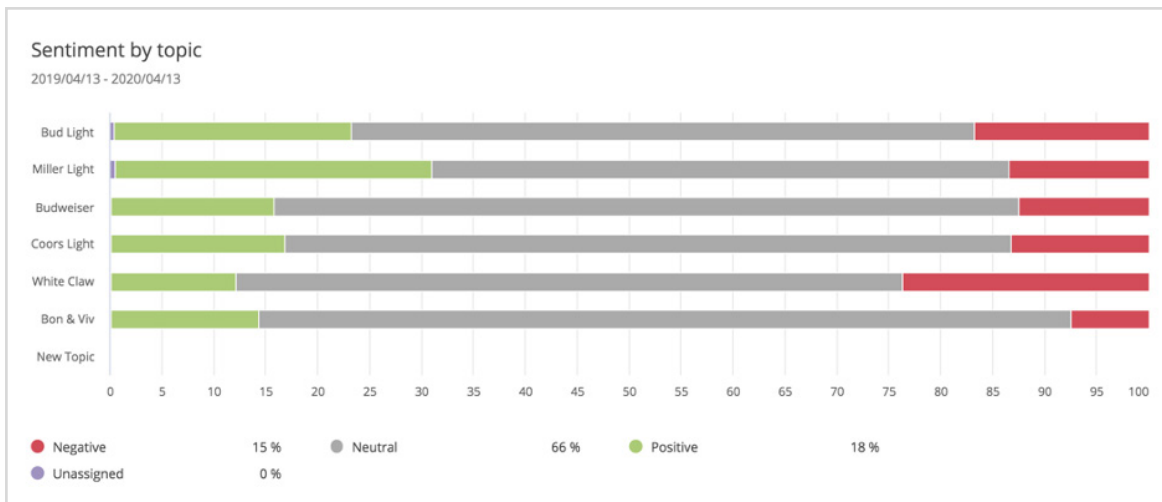
JUST IN: Anheuser-Busch to launch a third seltzer brand. [@budlight](#) seltzer will reportedly join [@BONandVIV](#) & [@naturallight](#) Seltzer, according to [@BeerInsights](#).

2:29 PM · Sep 12, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

## Step 4: Uncover Causes of High Positive Sentiment

In addition to looking at spikes in conversations and share of voice, our client was highly interested in measuring online sentiment toward these beverages. After all, not all attention is good attention.





The most striking finding was the high positive sentiment associated with Miller Lite. Synthesio surfaced the top posts that contributed to positive audience reactions, many of which were celebrity endorsements. Interestingly, the top two posts were both from former reality TV stars.

For example, Jed Wyatt, a musician and winner of the 2019 season of *The Bachelorette*, performed at an event that Miller Lite had sponsored.

**jedwyatt** • Follow

jedwyatt Yesterday was a dream. Thank you @iheartradio @millerlite @kramergirl for such a great day. 🇺🇸

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28,091 likes

SEPTEMBER 8, 2019

Comments on this post have been limited.

Another top post was from Ben Higgins, a reality TV star who had been on both *The Bachelorette* and *The Bachelor*.



**Miller Lite's strong influencer and celebrity endorsement program is a significant contributor to the high positive sentiment associated with its brand and product.** Furthermore, it seems to have found an audience with fans of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*.

Last but not least, another top contributor to positive audience attitudes was Miller Lite's partnership with football team Carolina Panthers. **Miller Lite's approach is successful because it recognizes the popularity of its products with unique tribes, such as sports fans and fans of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*.**



Using competitor research to understand the landscape of the beverage industry helped our client understand the unique markets of hard seltzer and beer, how targeted content can boost brand image online, and how online audiences talk about top brands.

A primary goal of this competitor research study was for our client to identify whether to expand into the beer market or the hard seltzer market. After seeing the growth behind alcoholic seltzer, our client decided to begin development for a hard seltzer line of its own. By conducting competitor benchmarking, the team was also able to see that White Claw's popularity was closely tied with the digital behavior of young adults on social media. Therefore, the team structured its launch plan with social media campaigns as the central component.

Moreover, the team was highly interested in partnering with influencers and celebrities. However, in a world with so many public figures, our client prioritized identifying those that would connect most with its target audience. Therefore, they turned to Synthesio's [audience analysis](#) tool, Profiler, to pinpoint the unique interests, hobbies, and preferences of hard seltzer fans.

Furthermore, while conversations about hard seltzer often include flavors (i.e. mango, black cherry, etc.), audiences hardly mention flavor when talking about beer products. This indicated to our client that taste is a high priority for hard seltzer. Therefore, the team is working with a market research agency to test their product, flavors, and campaigns with a young adult focus group.







# My team is interested in benchmarking and analyzing our performance against our competitors. What are our next steps?

Solely focusing on your performance will leave you falling behind your competitors and result in missed opportunities. To become a true leader in your industry, you need to have a complete picture. See how you measure up to your competitors by reaching out to our team for a competitor research [demo](#).

**Know where each player stands today.  
Request a demo.**