Competitive Audit Report: Water Project

1. Competitive audit goal(s)

Compare the experience of purchasing water testing (in-home or kits) using different competitor's websites.
Compare competitor's websites both on desktop and mobile to understand how the process of finding water education information is, as well as purchasing water testing kits.

2. Who are your key competitors?

Our key competitors are: My Tap Score, Water Research Center, 120 Water, Culligan Water, Contra Costa Water District.

From these our direct competitors include My Tap Score, and 120 Water. Our indirect competitors include Water Research Center, Culligan Water, and Contra Costa Water District.

3. What are the type and quality of competitors' products?

My Tap Score is a direct competitor and the most closely related to the business activity our company. They sell home water testing kits and have created new technology in water testing which involves using electrochemical bonding to remove the dangerous contaminants before they reach people's taps. They have adequately created a responsive web app so that people can use their website on mobile devices.

The Water Research Center provides users with articles and information on water testing, such as reports on illnesses caused by unsafe water and educational guides on water pollution. They do not sell water testing kits on their site, but instead have an external link that sends users to a 3rd party website where they can purchase such products.

120 Water uses digital water solutions so that more can be done with less resources. This involves using cloud-based software and digital sampling kits to test and check the safety of drinking water as well as wastewater. They have transparency in their pricing and have different information and resources for users depending on if they are individuals, engineers, a business, or wanting to test public water systems.

Culligan Water is an indirect competitor and not necessarily focused on water testing as the main part of their business. They do provide in-home water quality testing, but they also have bottled water delivery, well water treatment, salt delivery, and portable exchange. Services and pricing are dependent on location, though they claim to have locations internationally.

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Contra Costa Water District is a local website run by a public water agency. They provide safe and clean drinking water to homes in their area of Northern California. Within the scope of their business they also provide water quality testing. Moreover, they have a water quality testing program for pre-selected homes to monitor water quality in particular areas. Anyone in their area can apply and the testing would be done over the course of 3 years with the intent of studying water quality in the area.

4. How do competitors position themselves in the market?

My Tap Score has a unique value proposition in that they use new technology in testing water. This involves using electrochemical bonding to remove the dangerous contaminants before it reaches people's taps.

The Water Research Center is able to position themself in the market by offering resources to the general public to learn about water and everything surrounding safe drinking water as well as heath issues that can arise from water pollution.

120 Water has been able to flourish in the digital age by uniquely offering cloud-based software and digital water sampling kits.

Culligan Water was the only company researched that provides in-home water testing, as well as being able to offer such services internationally.

Contra Costa Water District services a small geographical area, though is able to position themselves in the market by providing safe drinking water and offering water test reports to the public. They have a water quality testing program residents can sign up for to look at the water quality in their home over a 3 year period. This information would contribute to the reports they offer the public about the water quality in their area.

5. How do competitors talk about themselves?

My Tap Score talks about themself as being an award-winning science and health services company founded at the University of California in Berkley. According to them their mission is to improve people's drinking water and long term health.

The Water Research Center describes themselves as being a website that is dedicated to information and free resources for private well owners, the evaluation of water and wastewater treatment systems, private well water testing, water quality drinking water testing services, and education/outreach programs.

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120 Water talks about themselves as being a "trusted advisor for water programs across the country." They have digital water solutions that protect public health now and in the future by combining cloud-based software and digital sampling kits to help excite water safety, compliance, and wastewater monitoring programs. They claim to be an end-to end solution for drinking water of government, facilities, public water systems, and engineering firms.

Culligan Water proclaims they are the global leader in providing cleaner, softer water through innovative, sustainable solutions and unparalleled service. They put emphasis on their ability to provide safe drinking water to 90 countries worldwide and their longstanding company reputation, having been in business over 80 years.

Contra Costa Water District discusses themselves as being a public water agency, committed to transparency and sharing information about their services. They deliver safe and clean drinking water to over 500,000 people in central and eastern Contra Costa County in Northern California. According to them they are one of the largest urban water districts in California and a leader in drinking water treatment technology and source of water protection.

6. Competitors' strengths

My Tap Score:
- Modern branding, concise format
- Responsive web app with content reformatting to fit different screens and information paired down to be more concise for the goals of a mobile experience
- Water tests kits for purchase
- Hierarchal headings help screen readers
- Good color contrast between background and foreground text
- Main user actions are simple to find and execute
- Navigation menu includes the hamburger menu as well as the top navigation options across the top of the page
- Homepage is a good mix of visuals, information about water pollution, and product/ marketing that creates cohesion to the page
- The water report given is presented in an easily understood way, breaking down information for users who may not have much knowledge on water testing

The Water Research Center:
- Lots of educational information on water pollution given
- Simple navigation that easily brings you to the section about water testing or water treatment
- Logo and font choice is clear to read and simple
- Business does not sell water testing kits on their website, but does outsource to links where one can purchase them

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120 Water:
- Great visual design with modern font, and UI components
- Navigation is thorough yet concise
- Can easily move from page to page to complete main user actions
- Gestalt principles incorporated well to better organize the page
- Uses responsive web app design to resize and reformat objects on the page
- Menu items are fantastically nestled under larger categories
- Account login to save water testing results
- Price transparency of water testing kits
- Offers additional resources for learning about water pollution
- Easy to read typography (font, size, placement, color)
- Offers customer support and contact info
- Color contrast meets or exceeds WebAIM accessibility checker
- Main user flow is clear; user can easily find one page and move into the next, as well as complete desired user actions
- Water testing organized well so that different types of users can find the products and info they need (businesses, public water systems, individuals, engineers, etc)
- Water test kits for purchase (using digital solutions)
- "Resource" page has guides and external reading material (all downloadable and free, does require email and basic info)

Culligan Water:
- Water quality testing done, internationally
- Responsive web app, reformats and re-sizes content
- Provides in-home water quality testing
- Has some information on water pollution, studies, articles, etc. that would inform users about the importance of water testing
- "Chat with us" feature for those needing help on the website
- Large headers draw attention to certain parts of the page. Gives hierarchal order and helps screen readers
- Good color contrast between foreground and background
- Top navigation menu has all pertinent information users need to navigate from page to page
- Layout of pages is not cluttered and alike items are grouped, making it easier to navigate to other pages
- Search bar for quick navigation
- Excellent choice of typography (size, spacing, type, etc)
- Color consistent with branding

Contra Costa Water District:
- Top navigation makes finding most essential information easy
- Modern website design (choice of font, layout, balance, hierarchy)
- Responsive web app, reformats and re-sizes content
- Extensive section with water education for users (for individuals, teaching kids, etc).

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- Option to participate in water quality test program, something that no other website offered
- Water testing by the city
- Color contrast appears to pass Web AIM accessibility checker on most pages
- Most pages flow into one another and make sense
- Search bar helps to quickly navigate to certain sections
- Logo and colors on the page are in line with the branding for this company
- Compelling visuals have been used as well as buttons that fare unique to the brand
- Typography is consistent throughout pages and use color, size, and thickness to properly differentiate items by important
- Water testing for select participants
- Educational material for kids is provided
- PDFs of reports and water safety in that area is found on the website

7. Competitors' weaknesses

My Tap Score:
- Limited educational information on water pollution
- No articles or opportunities to contribute to studying water in your area
- No app for those with little internet connection
- Does not provide the opportunity to collect information and monitor water testing in your area
- Does not look at the longterm effects of water pollution, and maintaining the testing for certain intervals

The Water Research Center:
- Information is cluttered and hard to find on the page
- Buttons are poorly placed and scattered across page (no discernible formatting)
- No dedicated app or responsive mobile design
- While content will fit different screen sizes from edge to edge, it does not reformat and consider content, image size, button size, etc.
- Navigation menu has not been optimized for mobile
- Can not purchase water testing kits on website
- Does not use Gestalt principles, and as such makes things harder to read on the page. Also would be difficult for screen readers
- Color contrast between background and some foreground text doesn't seem to meet WebAIM accessibility checker
- Menu items should be nestled under one another. This would help with the user flow, as users start with finding the broad topic, and work their way to very specific thing they are trying to find
- No noticeable branding
- No cart or checkout to complete a user action of purchasing a water testing kit
- The links to educational info are difficult to find on the page
- Some information about water quality and contamination can only be viewed by purchasing the booklet

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120 Water:
- Banner above header takes up a significant amount of room on page for mobile
- Some text has been cut off and not re-sized correctly
- No dedicated mobile app, thus requiring internet connectivity to access information
- When on some pages and click through to the next (example: PDP), there are no back buttons to go back within the flow
- No back button to return to previous page, which in turn makes navigating back to pages difficult
- No menu option for "cart", can't quickly complete purchase.
- Some of the educational material is hard to navigate to as it isn't found under the main navigation bar at the top

Culligan Water:
- Limited Information on water pollution
- Unlike competitors, no ability to purchase test kit to complete it yourself
- Some visual design elements on website lack cohesion
- User must input information to find water quality testing near them (can't search the website to find info)
- Does not have dedicated mobile app, for those lacking constant internet connectivity
- Locations of where servicing is done isn't given without inputting user information and requesting more info
- Can't move back and forward in the flow
- Can't complete purchase on the website, must get information about locations near you before booking the water testing
- Some visual design elements on website lack cohesion
- Buttons are not always distinct enough as some sections have category tabs that look like buttons
- Some barriers to getting testing completed. It isn't as easy as purchasing testing, must give personal information to then receive info with locations near you
- Information about water pollution and articles are under the heading "Expert Advice". Wording should be clearer for users to find this info more easily

Contra Costa Water District:
- Only one section of the website allows you to get water testing completed
- Banners (2) above header take up almost half of the page (mobile)
- Limited articles or info for adults about water contamination
- Study limited to small geographical area in Contra Costa County
- Some pages, such as the "Water Education Page", use font and background color that does not provide enough contrastNo dedicated app for those with little internet connection
- Can't complete user action of purchasing water testing kit (unless apart of study)
- Can be challenging to find water study and sign up for it, following through with what the main user action on the website would be

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> - Can be challenging to find water study and sign up for it, following through with what the main user action on the website would be
> - Limited water testing to those that are in the particular geographical area, and that sign up and are accepted into the study
> - Does not sell water kits or say where to buy them
> - Water study somewhat difficult to find when using menu options, as there are a lot of menu options

8. Gaps

> Direct competitors sell water quality testing kits that also provide key insights into one's water and insights into what the results mean. They serve to make sure drinking water is safe and that it can be tested on a more individual basis. In contrast, indirect competitors don't necessarily sell water testing kits but do offer some of the more longterm water testing studies that direct competitors do not have. Their focus is on providing educational material about water health and the effects of water pollution. Some even have formulated programs to monitor the water of groups in areas over a period to keep drinking water safe and monitor how water quality effects an area. None of the companies researched are able to do both; providing water quality tests and insights, as well as operating long-term studies of water pollution in a given area.

9. Opportunities

> - Provide water quality testing kits for individuals to test water and have insights so they can understand their results
> - Have a water quality program and give users the option to participate so that you can use their results in combination with others to map out the water quality in certain geographical areas
> - For those involved in the water quality program/study:
>   - Encourage water testing in certain intervals to collect information for long-term studies and the effects of water pollution
>   - Have users list other health information they are willing to provide that could be relevant to the effects of water pollution
> - Optimize design for all types of screen sizes and devices
> - Create a dedicated mobile app for those that don't have constant internet connectivity