

**SOURCES OF COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN
HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIAN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES:
CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS**

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ABSTRACT

Every organization in particular healthcare facility is facing numerous challenges in delivering high-quality healthcare services to meet patients' aspirations through evidence best practices in the management of patients' clinical/health information that health information management personnel practices. As a result of diverse needs of different patients and population characteristics, and evolving technological trend in service delivery, competitive intelligence is paramount for healthcare providers to remain competitive and advantageous in their respective job demands, lifesaving and environmental safeties. In actualizing the aims of providing quality healthcare services to recipients, accurate, reliable and tangible information on healthcare transactions has to be sort for and gotten from diverse sources of information that are primary, and secondary, print and non-print media based on the information management regulatory policy in the country concerned.

Furthermore, healthcare stakeholders' collection or gathering of health data/information from diverse sources, analyzing and codifying it for actionable decision-making for quality healthcare services provisions in Nigeria has been a challenging over the years despite the laudable resources. To the aforementioned, the study recommends that all parastatal involve in healthcare service delivery, healthcare providers and other healthcare service stakeholders should always collaborate, work as a team to ensure good intelligence gathering and harnessing the phases of information/knowledge life cycle to remain competitive at minimum cost using right personnel at right time and right strategic management approach.

KEY WORDS: Competitive intelligence, Healthcare, Information, Personnel, Stakeholder, Strategic management. Teamwork.

INTRODUCTION

Every person needs one type of actionable information or the other to plan and make decisions regarding his/her safety, and well-being including the clemency of his/her environment. In the same vein, an organization collects information from diverse sources and converts it to knowledge that is shared and used for business transactions. This refined information got by a particular organization that others did not have enabled it to be competitive amongst its rivals within the locality it abodes or outside the immediate

community. Consequently, in healthcare settings or organizations, actionable information is crucial for quality healthcare service delivery to the target beneficiaries, and it aids in eliminating morbidity and mortality rate in society in general across the globe. Any information pertaining to patient care is referred to as health/medical information. This type of information is being managed in the healthcare facility by health information management personnel at the health information/records department.

According to Owolabi and Ojo (2015), Health Information Management personnel works in the health records department of the healthcare facility which serves as the first point of call to all patients who visit the healthcare facility. At each time patients receive health care in a healthcare facility, a record is created to document the patient's current symptoms, medical history, results of the examination, treatments rendered along with outcomes, and ancillary report results including laboratory, diagnoses, and plans for treatment. This patient data is organized, analyzed, and maintained by health information management personnel to ensure the delivery of quality health care. According to Green and Bowie (2011), health information management personnel are considered experts in managing patient health information and medical records, administering computer information systems, and coding diagnoses and procedures for health care services provided to patients.

Tapping from the proponents of scholars like Globenko and Sianova, Adil, Ghaswyneh and Aibkour (2013) as affirmed in Isaruk, Ikonne and Alegbeleye's (2021) study, patients' perception of service quality is a pointer to healthcare service delivery effectiveness, tangibility, assurance, empathy, and reliability. Therefore, in any healthcare facility, quality is an essential component of healthcare service delivery, and Health Information Management personnel should as a matter of necessity and ethical philosophy provide patient-centered healthcare services to patients at all times. Thus, quality healthcare services cannot be achieved without health information management personnel who holds the nitty-gritty of managing health and related health information and having competitive intelligence. Because, no actionable information, no proof of care rendered, and no tools for intelligence gathering for competitiveness in an organization. Hence, this numerous information gathered is being transcended from ordinary facts into intelligence that aids an organization remains relevant, and continuously having an advantage over others. Intelligence according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary ([OALD], 2015) 9th edition, is the ability of someone to learn, understand, and think in a logical way about something or situation. Intelligence enables an organization to leverage it to explore different ways of getting vital information for further intelligence articulation for competitiveness. Bloomenthal and Schmitt, (2021) observed that competitive intelligence is sometimes called corporate intelligence, and it means the ability of an organization to gather, analyze, and use information collected on competitors, customers, and other market factors that contribute to a business's competitive advantage. Competitive Intelligence involves the legal collection of information on rivals and the overall business environment. Thereafter, the knowledge gained from the information so collected is then used to enhance the organization's own competitiveness. Competitive intelligence is important in any human organization that is evolving in meeting the aspirations of its stakeholders. The reason is that it helps organizations understand the competitive environment, opportunities, and challenges it presents so as to take proactive possible initiatives for effective and efficient services and quality outputs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of diverse literature has shown uncountable interpretations of competitive intelligence. According to Liebowitz (2006), competitive intelligence is a field of activity that has rich antiquity, yet no agreeable and definitely definition. The scholar put forward that intelligence, as well as competitive intelligence, involves developing a systematic program for capturing, analyzing, and managing external and internal information and knowledge to improve organizational decision-making capability and competitiveness. However, from the numerous definition or descriptions of competitive intelligence, the concepts of data, information, and knowledge are ever-present in its core idea of collecting uneven data, making sense of it, and creating insights to better understand the competitive environment of an organization and to make better strategic decisions. Notwithstanding some insignificant differences in people's descriptions of competitive

intelligence, the main regular activities of the competitive intelligence-making process are planning, collection, analysis, and dissemination of valuable information. Competitive intelligence activities can also be grouped into two main dimensions such as tactical and strategic. Tactical intelligence is shorter-term and seeks to provide input into issues such as capturing market share or increasing revenues. Strategic intelligence focuses on longer-term issues, such as key risks and opportunities facing the enterprise. Furthermore, the competitive intelligence activities could always be regarded as a cycle that starts with intelligence needs and ends with their communication with the original inquirer (Cavallo, Sanasi, Ghezzi & Rangone, 2021).

Competitive intelligence can be defined as the assembling of actionable information gotten from diverse published and unpublished sources, analyzed, interpreted efficiently, and ethically used in actualizing organizational mission, vision, and critical goals. From the libraries tactic, Haliso and Aina (2012) defined competitive intelligence as the ability to seek information from other counterpart libraries and make use of the information to provide quality services and be in a better position than others. Interestingly, Badaoui and Chettih (2017), defined competitive intelligence from the academic and operational perspectives. From the academic competitive intelligence definition, competitive intelligence is a set of coordinated actions of research, processing, dissemination, and protection of strategic information, possibly involving the State and organizations. In this perspective, the trailed information is vast and extends to economic, competitive, scientific, technological, legal, and geopolitical to mention but a few. Whereas, from the operational perspective, competitive intelligence is defined as a combination of three informational functions namely intelligence, information protection, and influence.

The intelligence function is used to anticipate threats and opportunities and to reduce uncertainty. Any organization can practice intelligence by transforming actionable information into knowledge that will enable it better informed about the environment than its competitors, and to be informed about them. Intelligence as well as the competitive intelligence activities can always be regarded as an information cycle that starts with intelligence needs and ends with their communication to the original inquirer (Cavallo, Sanasi, Ghezzi & Rangone, 2021). Generally, information cycle phases/stages start from the identification of needs, collection, analysis/processing, publication, diffusion or dissemination, and reuse of the information. The intelligence function is used to modify the asymmetry of information that can exist between the organization and its competitors in favor of the firm that learns about others and is better than the others. On the other hand, the information protection function is concerned with information risk management. This function is used always to protect the information held or issued by the organization, specifically its appropriation by competitors. In view of that, the information risk management function preserves the asymmetry of information for the benefit of the firm that manages this risk. In addition, it ensures the safety and information security of the organization. Patent management is part of a company's defensive resource and protects technical knowledge. Confidentiality clauses, restrictions on access to premises, and firewalls are examples of tools available for managers to protect information. Finally, the influence function mission is to change the environment through information pressures. It also involves coordination, discouragement, and lobbying which is an established practice of business influence.

In Tahmasebifard's (2018) perspective, competitive intelligence is the process of collecting, processing, and analyzing information from and about the internal and external or competitive environment in order to help decision-makers in decision-making and to provide a competitive advantage to the enterprise. The scholar further emphasized that, the breadth of the range of information is considered in competitive intelligence activities, and that quite a lot of subtypes have been bought for competitive intelligence which includes market intelligence, competitor intelligence, technological intelligence, strategic and social intelligence, structural–organizational intelligence.

Some scholars averred Competitive Intelligence as a subset of knowledge management that takes in the management of information from and about organizations' external environment. Good competitive

intelligence gathering always brings benefits to diverse organizations including healthcare. This competitive intelligence can be carried out either through for-profit or non-profit enterprises by professionals, associations or pressure groups, and private or public-owned organizations. Competitive intelligence users are composed of all managerial, operational, and strategic levels of personnel within the organization. Weiss (2002) posited that Competitive intelligence is used as an input in business aspects including strategic planning, benchmarking, investing, product planning, marketing, and the sales process, which demands an informed decision on the external business environment.

Gracanin, Kalac and Jovanovic (2015) opined Competitive Intelligence as activities possibly represent a source of sustainable competitive advantage, for all companies or organizations that successfully use it in three ways viz: i). by making useful, timely, and relevant information, competitive intelligence positively influences the process of forming strategy, providing key information on the business environment and competitors during the critical phase of the strategic decision-making. ii). The specific and accumulated knowledge of competitive intelligence employees can positively influence the process of implementation and development strategies, by ensuring that the amassed knowledge and information are communicated to decision-makers, and that information and knowledge are integrated into all deliberations of management-related to the process of strategic management. iii). Continuous use and development of competitive intelligence activities within a single company creates increasing market obstacles to competition, and can also be a source of competitive advantage for those companies that are dedicated to developing and maintaining their competitive intelligence activities.

Competitive Intelligence enables all levels of managers in organizations of all sizes to make decisions about everything - marketing, research and development, investments, and long-term business strategies. CI is a continuous process, which includes a legal and ethical collection of information, analysis that does not avoid unwanted conclusions, and controlled dissemination of knowledge and information to decision-makers. The competitive Intelligence process includes collecting, analyzing, and providing timely and useful information and knowledge, which are essential for managers and all decision-makers for improving the competitive position of their companies - in the eyes of consumers (Cobb, 2003). Competitive intelligence also provides tools for transforming raw information regarding the competitive environment into the information and knowledge that is used to make strategic business decisions.

Competitive intelligence has been adjudged in numerous pieces of literature as an important aspect of strategic management in any organization that wants to be an outlier or extreme relevance amongst its competitors. The term strategy is defined in the OALD (2015), as a plan made by an organization (private or public) that is intended to achieve a particular purpose. For any organization or enterprise, the goal of competitive intelligence is to help make better-informed decisions and enhance organizational performance by discovering its area of strengths, weaknesses, risks, and opportunities before they become readily ostensible. In a nutshell, the core objectives of the application of competitive intelligence as part of any organization including healthcare strategic management are to prevent businesses (healthcare services) from being caught off guard by any oppositional forces, competitors as well as prevent the organization from going into extinction. In addition, competitive intelligence aids decision-makers measure their performance against rivals and making effective future strategies.

A distinctive competitive intelligence learning includes information and analysis from countless unique sources such as the news media, customers, patients/clients, competitor interviews, industry experts, trade shows and conferences, government records, and public filings. To some competitive intelligence users, these publicly accessible information sources are ordinary starting points. Competitive intelligence also encompasses investigating the full breadth of a company's stakeholders, collaborators, corporate partners, key distributors, and suppliers, as well as customers and competitors.

Ashrafi, Kelleher and Kuilboer, (2014) aver that competitive intelligence also transforms erratic information into intelligence in order to support business decisions. Decision-makers in the healthcare sectors are concurrently facing multifaceted challenges all over the healthcare facilities in the world in both developed and developing countries to deliver quality healthcare services to the target population. In the same vein, the health information management department is facing difficulty with standard health information management practices that will accelerate high-quality healthcare improvement. Therefore, the adoption and implementation of competitive intelligence and strategic management principles will enhance the holistic identification of threats, weaknesses, opportunities, and measures to solidify care's competitive advantage. In the study of Badaoui and Chettih (2017), strategy management is originally a military term, and it connotes the act of carrying away war and directing means for victory. Hence, it is a problem of thwarting the opponent's plans to seek to confront him directly by flattering him, dividing him, avoiding him when he is strong, and thereafter surprising him, and encouraging him to arrogance. In a nutshell, the fundamental perception is to run the war with the minimum of devoted means. Strategy management in a non-military institution is an art of designing and organizing diverse means aiming at the accomplishment of the objectives in relation to an evolving and competitive environment which by all accounts ought to be well recognized. Hamel (2000) opined that a core strategy management approach represents the centerpiece of the organizational business model, and it involves defining such things as its value proposition, its 'big goals', and its performance objectives. It also involves defining its own distinctive value chain that focuses on performing different activities or performing similar activities in different ways.

Competitive intelligence and strategic management are the fulcra of quality service delivery in any organization. Quality healthcare services cannot be achieved through competitive intelligence and strategic management alone in the different levels of healthcare facilities or organizations in any country without the effortless services of the Health Information Management personnel. The Health Information Management personnel exist in the healthcare facility as a result of the nature of information present and generated in the healthcare facility. According to Ojo, and Owolabi (2017), Health Information Management personnel practices include acquiring, analyzing, and protecting digital and traditional medical information vital to providing quality patients care, and informed decisions, ensuring health information of the hospital is not exposed to third parties without prior consent from the authorized body or personnel. More so, health information is sensitive in nature that requires qualified personnel to manage the health records and other relevant statistical information of event occurrence in the healthcare facilities with the prerogative of being monitored by the regulatory body.

Similarly, Green and Bowie (2011) opined that, personnel working in the health information management department render some patient-centric services such as initiating patients into the hospital register, thereby generating a unique identifier while also capturing patients' personal identifying information; retrieval of patients' health records during subsequent visits, handling and monitoring movements of patients' case notes. They are also charged with stamping and registration of official documents such as death certificates and sick leave, as well as assigning and recording patients' next appointment dates. The above-mentioned signposts the pivotal role being played by the health information management department in the overall healthcare facility service delivery. Hence, one could posit that health information management practitioners having competitive intelligence for strategic management of health and related health information will enable the health information management department to be competitive and always contribute immensely to quality healthcare services delivery, high-quality care improvement, and sustenance.

Management, according to Osundina, (2017) is all about getting things done through other people. As a result, for any health organization to accomplish the managerial functions which are planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting, monitoring, evaluating, and control of healthcare services, there is a need for the availability of accurate high-quality health information at the right place and at the right time and used by the right personnel for competitive intelligence services. Osundina further emphasized that for a healthcare organization to achieve a competitive advantage over other healthcare

organizations, there is the need for health information management personnel, other healthcare, and allied healthcare providers to improve the quality of healthcare services delivered to patients especially with the application of ICT to integrate electronic health records (EHR) to enable quick access and sharing of patient's health information among the health care stakeholders in the healthcare facility and motivate professionals either in kind or cash so as to increase their level of commitment to the organizational goals.

Consequently, in this era of evolving information technology, and surplus of information across media, ever-changing the right sources for meeting specific goals and objectives can be problematic. Therefore, it is eminent that the organization first identify its direct competitors and determines cardinal areas of interest and research goals; thereafter gather external and internal competitive intelligence before centralizing competitive intelligence, and then building competitor profiles. In addition, sharing competitive insights with relevant stakeholders so that gaps that will hinder its effectiveness and user efficiency will not be entertained.

SOME SOURCES OF COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE IN HEALTHCARE SETTING

Organization operations vary though some could be having similar structures and in certain areas of activities which also helps to determine its competitive intelligence sources. Competitive intelligence is an imperative aspect of strategic management. It aids decision-makers in measuring their performances against rivals, and to make effective future strategies. There are diverse sources of competitive intelligence for strategic management in any serviceable organization. According to Cavallo, Sanasi, Ghezzi and Rangone, (2021) who cited Fahey and King (1977) in their study, the first stage of the Competitive Intelligence process should encompass the identification of intelligence requirements before collection of data from several sources. These different sources of intelligence gathering could be formal, informal, internal, external, published, unpublished, and human sources.

However, in this era where information can be gotten in print media (e-copy and hardcopy), verbal and non-verbal, audio and audio-visual, and through other formats, scrutinizing the right sources for meeting specific goals and objectives can be challenging. Therefore, on the radar of every organization, the sources of competitive intelligence for strategic management in the health information management department of the hospital should include primary and secondary sources like social media, annual reports, premium databases, syndicated reports/ analyst reports, monthly/routinely clinical care reports, competitor websites, patent databases, opinion/community leaders interviews, patient support groups interaction reports, patient participatory in decision-making themselves, competitors websites, caregivers, health partners (such as WHO, USAID, World Bank, UNICEF, IOM) websites/databases, and healthcare providers database, and community of practice publications and symposiums.

FACTORS THAT COULD HINDER GETTING GOOD SOURCES OF COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE IN HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Certain factors could hinder health information management practitioners as well as other health and allied healthcare practitioners from getting competitive intelligence from the right sources at the right time include:

- i). Inability of the personnel or organization to identify the competitive intelligence needs.
- ii). Inordinate attitude of some personnel towards their tasks and their colleagues.
- iii). Poor teamwork culture
- iv). Poor leadership style
- v). Lack of adequate remuneration structure implementation
- vi). lack of prerequisite infrastructure and professional human resources
- vii). Lack of technological (ICT) skills on the part of healthcare providers
- viii). Language and cultural barrier
- ix). Poor policy implementation
- x). Lack of interoperability of healthcare services
- xi). Confidential and security of health information threats
- xii). Patent and information resources licensures

- xiii). Lack of funding and appropriate logistics
- xiv). Lack of collaboration and willpower to share and manage information
- xv). The problem of Information resources (database, journals, and textbooks) subscription
- xvi). Lack of training and retraining of personnel.
- xvii). Lack of institutional support and enabling work environment.
- xviii). Lack of digitalization of health information (i.e. lack of electronic health information management practices) in Nigerian healthcare facilities.

BENEFITS OF COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Ideally, a competitive intelligence strategic management system exists to support future-oriented decision-making and actions for all primary and support elements of the institution's value chain through the collection of discrete activities in which competitive advantage resides at all organizational levels be it corporate, divisional, regional, department or healthcare service delivery unit. According to Bernhardt (2003), competitive intelligence can well make the defining difference in the outcome of acquisitions, product and technology development, and marketing strategies and service delivery. Diverse benefits can be derived from the implementation of competitive intelligence strategic management in an organization despite the structure, circumstances, and operational activities. To this, Bernhardt also posited some specific benefits of a good competitive intelligence strategic management in an organization.

- i). Competitive Intelligence improves productivity, healthcare service delivery, or leveraging, of the organization's knowledge assets, thereby serving as a driver of increased shareholder value.
- ii). It gives stakeholders early warning of competitive threats and opportunities to capitalize upon.
- iii). Competitive Intelligence is a unique source of unbiased news, truth, and analysis relevant to strategic and operational decision-making in order to facility quality healthcare provisions.
- iv). It aids to improve cross-functional relationships throughout the organization and partner institutions.
- v). Competitive Intelligence enhances the provision of ongoing information and other resources linkages with security, and preferably counterintelligence.
- vi). Competitive Intelligence serves as a reinforcement of a 'culture' of competitiveness in the healthcare industry by focusing on external threats and influences on healthcare beneficiaries' perceptions.
- vii). Competitive Intelligence always enable top management personnel to proactively task their intelligence unit with intelligence requirements and integrate intelligence input into their decision-making processes.
- viii). Competitive Intelligence deliverables are high value-added products. They provide 'analysis that helps managers to develop a sound picture of the world, to list the possible ways to achieve their action goals and to influence others to accept their visions (Gardiner, 1989 in Bernhardt, 2003).
- ix). Competitive intelligence aids judicious use of available resources and personnel.
- x). It also enables an organization to be up-to-date in intelligence gathering irrespective of the changes in the global professional practices and mode of healthcare service delivery worldwide.
- xi). It helps to solidify collaboration and information content sharing in line with approved policies.
- xii). It helps management to convert knowledge into organization repository assets.
- xiii). It enhances standard information management practices culture.
- xiv). It facilitates specialization by ensuring job specification and enrichment devoid of usurpation of power by some top stakeholders of healthcare system.

CONCLUSION

Competitive intelligence is an indispensable tool for organizational strategic management in a competitive environment like the healthcare industry that is saddled with the management of human beings' health issues in ensuring healthy living and safe environment. The sources of competitive intelligence for strategic management in the health information management department of any private or public healthcare facility are basically primary (monthly/routinely clinical care reports, annual reports, opinion/community leaders interviews, patient support groups interaction reports, patient participatory in decision-making themselves),

and secondary (premium databases, syndicated reports/analyst reports, competitor websites, patent databases, competitors websites, health partners websites, internet and social media). These sources are always affected with some factors like lack of institutional supports, inordinate staff attitude, lack of teamwork, poor leadership style and inability of the management personnel to identifying competitive intelligence needs in an organization among others. Healthcare service delivery is dynamic and multi-complexity in nature and structure, and cannot be gainfully ascertained and sustained without consistent competitive intelligence through error free sources. Hence, health information management as the brainbox for competitive intelligence need to be standardly practice in line with evolving global perspectives.

WAY FORWARD

For effective and efficient implementation of competitive intelligence in the health information management department of any healthcare facility for the attainment of competitive advantage, high-quality patient cares, and possible decision-making, health information management personnel who are concerned with health information management practices are to be skilled and knowledgeable to identify competitive intelligence needs and right sources of getting relevant and timely actionable information and disseminating them to the appropriate strategic, operation and managerial personnel in the organization.

In addition, all prerequisite infrastructure, human and other relevant resources are to be made available for prompt use for competitive intelligence activities by government and private healthcare facilities owners. Conclusively, implementation of enabling policy, teamwork, good/right leadership style, healthcare providers' motivation, and institutional supports should be made sacrosanct and continuous sustainable across the diverse tiers of healthcare delivery facilities irrespective of where they are located or operating.

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