

Rental Website Search Scores

Edmonton, June 2009

<http://www.chrisdavies.ca>

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Why Search Engines?

Prospective renters use search engines for every stage of the research process. Even when they already know the address of your site, they often type it in to Google without realizing it.

Takeaway: Use rental websites that show up well in Google. Renters will be more likely to find you.

Canadian Search Engine Market Share (Apr '09; Hitwise)	
Google	80.17%
Yahoo!	8.84%
Microsoft	7.34%
Ask	2.75%

Understanding Search Engines

The screenshot shows a Google search for "edmonton apartments". The search bar contains the text "edmonton apartments" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there are two sections of results:

- Sponsored Links (Paid Listings):** These are highlighted with a red border. They include:
 - www.vertica.ca Photos, floorplans, many locations. Rental Living Made Easy – for you!
 - www.CapRent.com Ideal Location, minutes to downtown Act now for our Move in Bonus !
 - www.QuickRental.ca Search 1000s of photos and listings Free Apartment Rental Listing
 - www.Viewit.ca Find Rental Apartments in Edmonton See interior/exterior photographs
 - www.Realstar.ca Unrivaled Selection of High Quality Alberta Apartments. 24 Hr Approval
 - www.Kijiji.ca Free, Local Classifieds at Kijiji Edmonton apartments & more
 - www.GottaRent.com Search Edmonton apartments for rent with photos, maps and much more.
 - www.Sublet.com Post or Find Apartments and Room Rentals. Browse & List For Free!
- Organic (Free) Listings:** These are highlighted with a green border. They include:
 - www.rentedmonton.com/ - Cached - Similar Just click on the area of Edmonton you want to move to, you can then view pictures, descriptions, and prices of the houses, apartments, and town homes ...
 - www.247apartments.com/rentals/Alberta/Edmonton.asp - Cached - Similar Search apartments and houses for rent in Edmonton. View interactive maps of Edmonton, Alberta apartment rentals on 24/7 Apartments.
 - www.rentfaster.ca/ - Cached - Similar Calgary and Edmonton apartments for rent. Homes and apartments in Calgary and Edmonton Alberta for rent. Renters search all Calgary, Edmonton rental ...
 - [Apartments Edmonton | Search for a Edmonton Apartment Rental on ...](#)

- **Organic Listings** are determined by a complex algorithm and cannot be purchased or artificially manipulated. However, great sites will rank better.
- **Sponsored Listings** are advertisements and can be purchased. Cost varies on the keyword and the quality of the website.

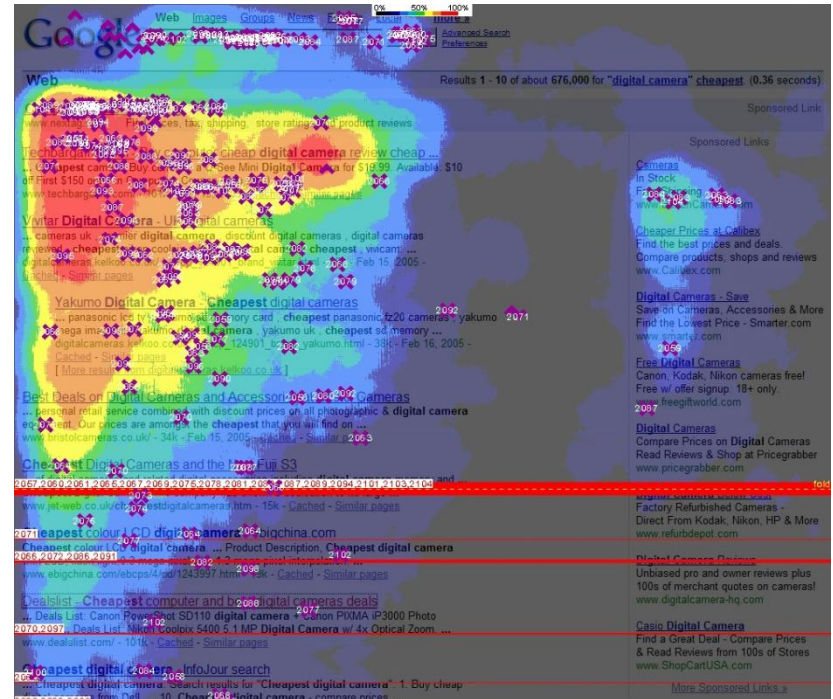
Organic (Free) Listings

Sponsored (Paid) Listings

Google's Golden Triangle

People click on the top organic result more often than any other. Websites that consistently rank near the top of the search results will get more traffic.

Takeaway: Advertise on websites that rank well and show up often.



Source: Enquiro Research

www.enquiroresearch.com/eyetracking-report.aspx

“Apartment” or “Apartments”?

People don't all search for the same words. Some have higher *search volume* than others.

Ranking #1 for 'apartments for rent' (~25M searches) is better than #1 for 'apartment rent' (200k searches).

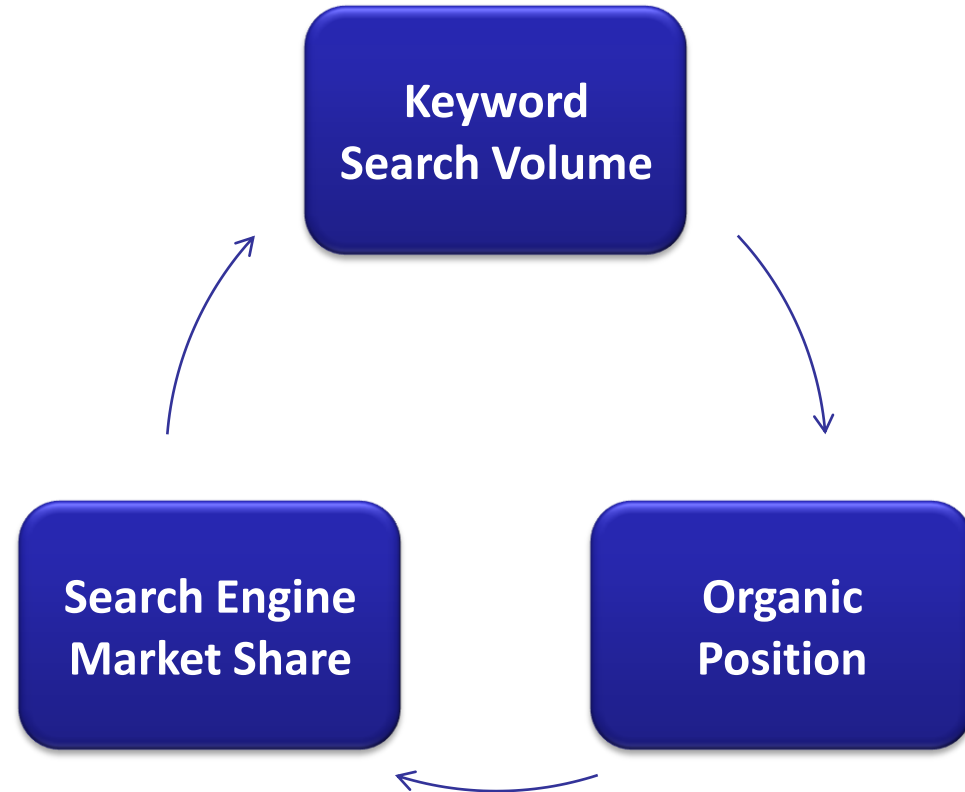
Keywords are selected for search volume and relevance.

Keywords	Local Search Volume
apartments for rent	24,900,000
Apartments	13,600,000
for rent	13,600,000
apartments rent	11,100,000
rental housing	7,480,000
house rental	5,000,000
rentals	3,350,000
edmonton housing	1,220,000
apartment	1,000,000

Scoring Websites

Creating a score takes three items into account:

- Search Engine
- Keyword
- Organic Position



June 2009: A Trial Run

For this First Edition of the Canadian Rental Website Ranking Report there are several caveats:

- All searches were performed on Google, using an Edmonton-based IP address. Due to an error in collection, the session was logged into Gmail, allowing for possible personalized results based on prior search and browsing activity.
- 25 keywords were tested and the results run through the algorithm to see which websites floated to the surface.
- Sub-domains were counted under the primary domain. E.g. <http://edmonton.kijiji.ca> and <http://toronto.kijiji.ca> were both counted as kijiji.ca.
- There are non-rental websites in this mix. Rather than remove them all, I'm leaving some of the noise in the raw data. Search engines aren't perfect, and your renters will see them too.

June 2009: A Trial Run

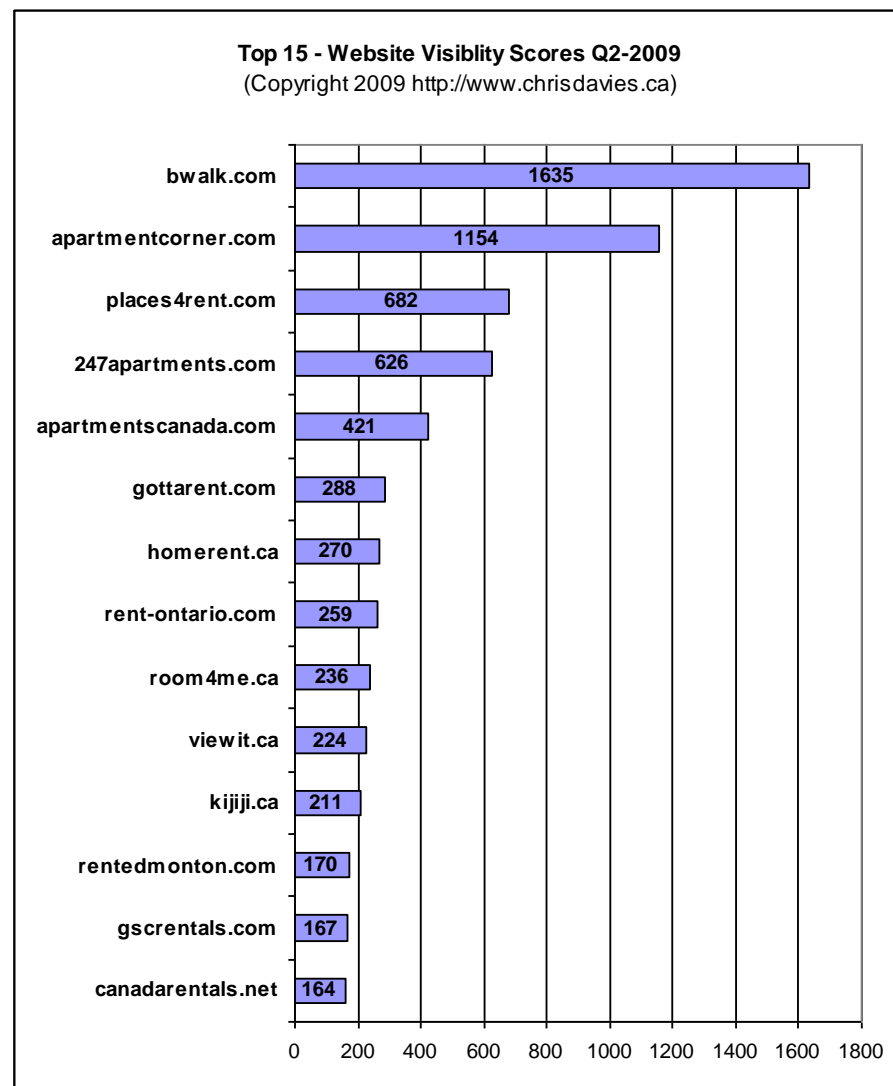
For the 25 keywords the top 10 organic search results, not including local (map) listings were captured and assigned a score based on their rank. The rank assigned was based on research conducted by Enquiro, other analytics data and personal experience. The scores were then totaled and sorted. A total of 76 websites were observed.

Top 15 Rental Sites for Search

1. **apartmentcorner.com**
2. **places4rent.com**
3. **247apartments.com**
4. **apartmentscanada.com**
5. **gottarent.com**
6. **homerent.ca**
7. **rent-ontario.com**
8. **room4me.ca**
9. **viewit.ca**
10. **kijiji.ca**
11. **rentedmonton.com**
12. **gscrentals.com**
13. **canadarentals.net**
14. **renters.ca**
15. **apartmentguide.ca**

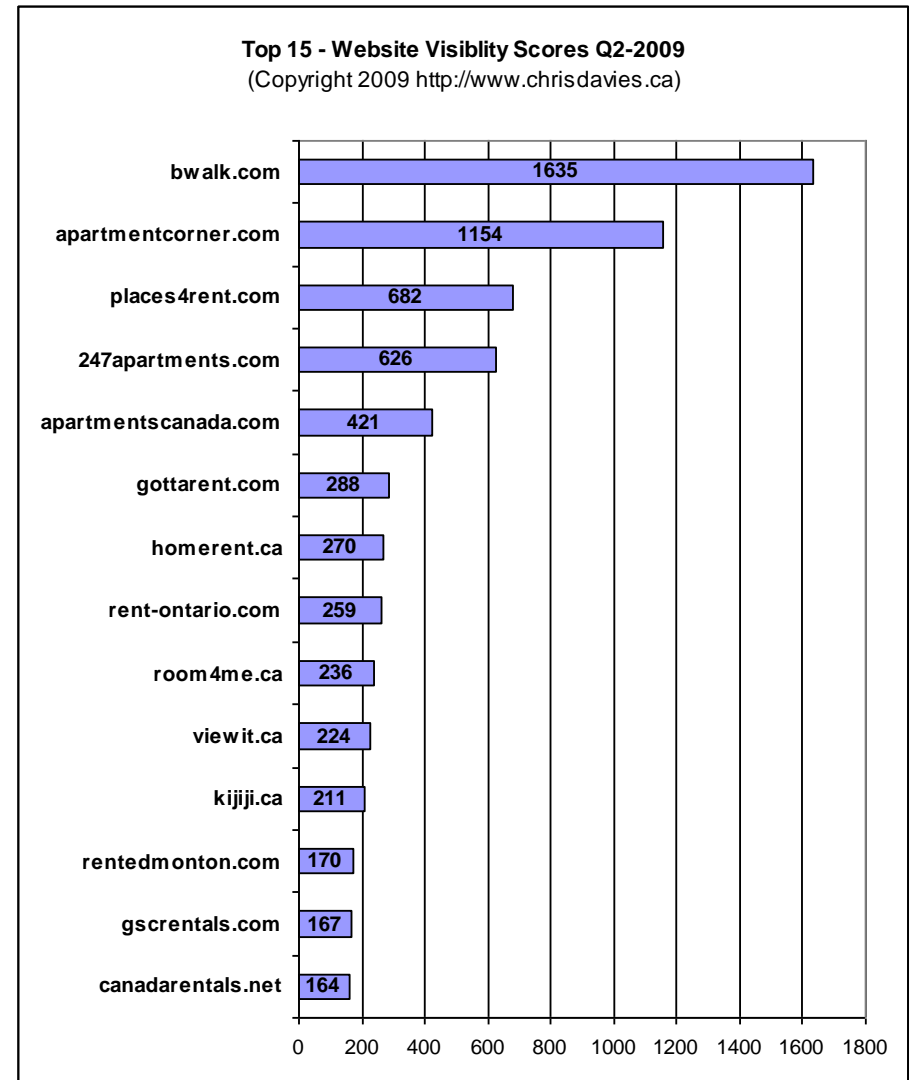
The Top 15 (June 2009)

As expected, relatively few websites dominate the rankings, with a close pack lingering in the middle of the first page of results for many terms. However, sites like rentedmonton.com had good rankings for long tail keywords like “edmonton apartments for rent”. Longer keywords often refer more qualified traffic.



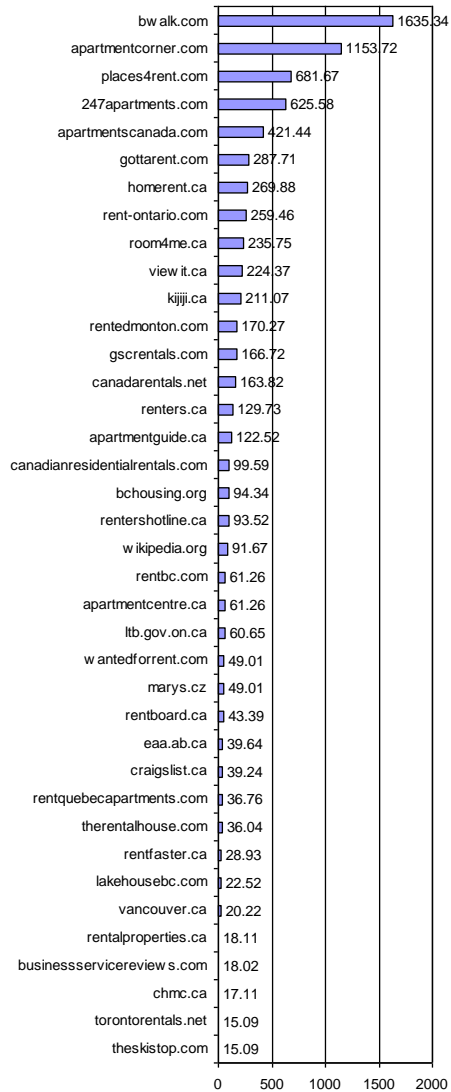
The Top 15 (June 2009)

Boardwalk (www.bwalk.com) dominated many high volume terms. This is because they were an early market leader with a very effective website. Their interactive map allowed prospective renters to view maps, buildings, photos and actual rents. They benefited from a first mover advantage, attracting hundreds of excellent links which help their rankings.



**Website Visibility Scores Q2 - 2009
Upper Half**

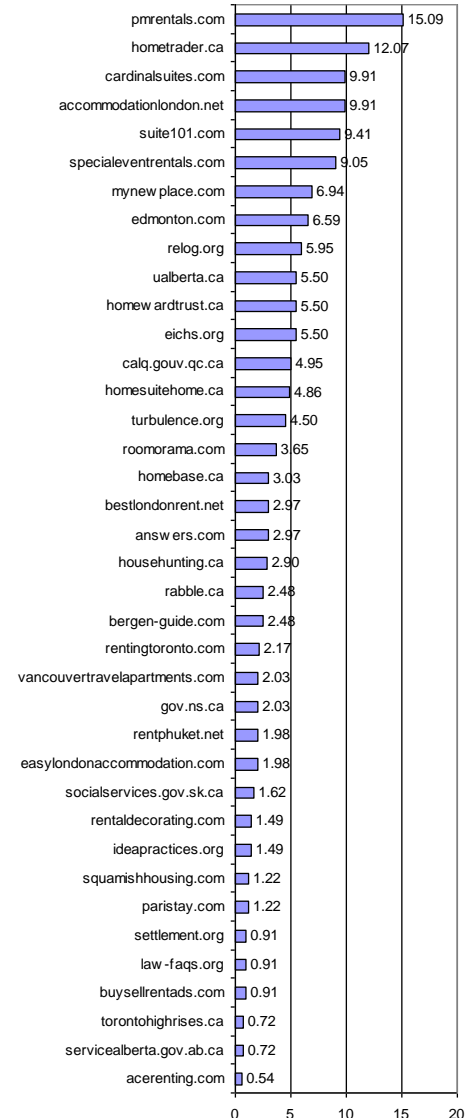
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The Rest

**Website Visibility Scores Q2 - 2009
Lower Half**

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The Big List

1. bwalk.com
2. apartmentcorner.com
3. places4rent.com
4. 247apartments.com
5. apartmentscanada.com
6. gottarent.com
7. homerent.ca
8. rent-ontario.com
9. room4me.ca
10. viewit.ca
11. kijiji.ca
12. rentedmonton.com
13. gscrentals.com
14. canadarentals.net
15. renters.ca
16. apartmentguide.ca
17. canadianresidentialrentals.com
18. bchousing.org
19. rentershotline.ca
20. wikipedia.org
21. rentbc.com
22. apartmentcentre.ca
23. ltb.gov.on.ca
24. wantedforrent.com
25. marys.cz
26. rentboard.ca
27. eaa.ab.ca
28. craigslist.ca
29. rentquebecapartments.com
30. therentalhouse.com
31. rentfaster.ca
32. lakehousebc.com
33. vancouver.ca
34. rentalproperties.ca
35. businessservicereviews.com
36. chmc.ca
37. torontorentals.net
38. theskistop.com
39. pmrentals.com
40. hometrader.ca
41. cardinalsuites.com
42. accommodationlondon.net
43. suite101.com
44. specialeventrentals.com
45. mynewplace.com
46. edmonton.com
47. relog.org
48. ualberta.ca
49. homewardtrust.ca
50. eichs.org
51. calq.gouv.qc.ca
52. homesuitehome.ca
53. turbulence.org
54. roomorama.com
55. homebase.ca
56. bestlondonrent.net
57. answers.com
58. househunting.ca
59. rabble.ca
60. bergen-guide.com
61. rentingtorenton.com
62. vancouvertravelapartments.com
63. gov.ns.ca
64. rentphuket.net
65. easylondonaccommodation.com
66. socialservices.gov.sk.ca
67. rentaldecorating.com
68. ideapractices.org
69. squamishhousing.com
70. paristay.com
71. settlement.org
72. law-faqs.org
73. buysellrentads.com
74. torontohighrises.ca
75. servicealberta.gov.ab.ca
76. acerenting.com

Conclusions

Checking search results can be an important part of determining one's marketing strategy. Rental websites which rank highly will receive more traffic, however a more detailed analysis is required to show just how this impacts the effectiveness of the site as an advertising medium.

I don't recommend any of these sites more than any other. This analysis is only one step when choosing which sites to advertise on. What it does is give you one more starting point, and can help identify new entrants into the market who your tenants may be seeing.

Next Steps

The next edition of Rental Website Search Scores will include:

- More keywords
- Results from Yahoo, Bing and Ask
- Limiting results to sites which allow advertising

Action Items for Investors & Landlords

- 1. Do your own keyword analysis.** Choose phrases that you think prospective tenants would use. Then examine Google Trends or the Keyword Tool to get a feel for each phrase's popularity. Be sure to set it for Canadian results.
- 2. Go start searching.** Look for websites that are consistently on the first page. They don't have to be at the top, just in the neighborhood.
- 3. Test your other advertising.** Use unique emails and phone numbers for each website or medium so you can tell what is working.

Resources

Google Trends: <http://www.google.com/trends>

Google Keyword Tool:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

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