



# Advertiser Perception & Today's Renter Reality



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# Advertiser Perception & Today's Renter Reality

Background: Apartments.com engaged Slack and Company to lead two comprehensive research projects to obtain unbiased opinions that confirm or dispel the perceptions of multifamily industry. One study seeks to gain a better understanding of today's renter in terms of where they search for their next apartment, what they value and how they ultimately contact properties. The research was conducted using an external panel to get a representative cross-section of rental property shoppers across the country and across demographics groups. A second study was conducted to learn more about the advertising sources used by property professionals, the criteria for success and what they believe drives renters to their property. These blind and anonymous research surveys were designed to obtain unbiased opinions from both consumers as well as property professionals.

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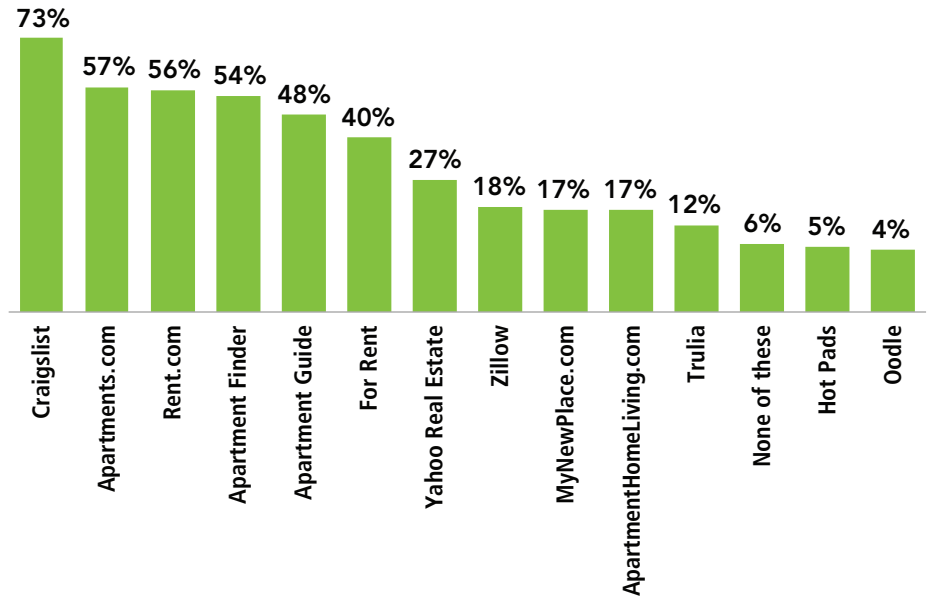
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# Key Findings from the Consumer Study

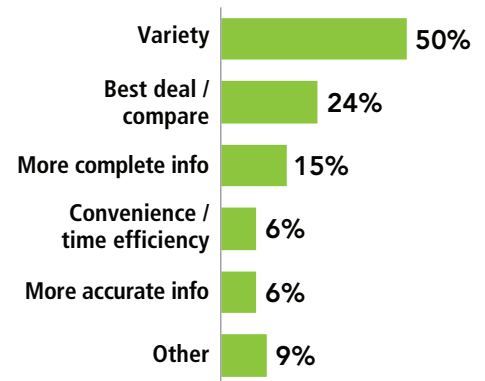
## Renter Behaviors

Today's renter is aware of a variety of sources they could use to obtain information for their apartment search.



79% of consumers indicated that they use multiple sources for their research and on average renters use 4 sources.

For most renters, a single source doesn't meet his or her needs. 79% of consumers indicated that they use multiple sources for their research and on average renters use 4 sources. The most common reasons cited for using multiple sources are: searching for a variety of options, looking for the best deal and trying to find complete information.

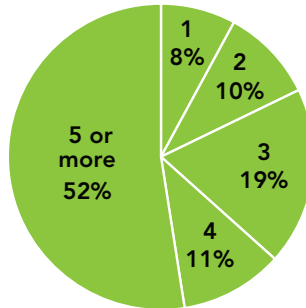


When it comes to how they find their online resources, renters simply know Craigslist – so they use their URL. To find full-featured Internet Listing Sites (ILS) and to an even greater extent, to find property specific web sites, renters rely on Search Engines to find listing options in the areas that they are searching. This demonstrates the need for SEM and SEO to be a part of the marketing mix for most players in the industry. Only 20% type in the property's website address and 34% type in the ILS's website address.

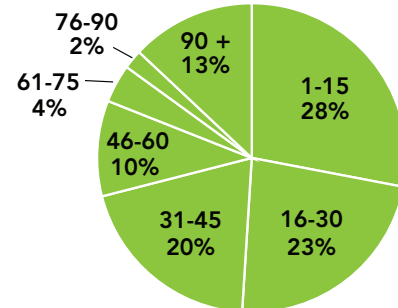
52% [of renters] indicated that they looked at 5 or more apartments.

Most renters look at 3 or more apartments. In fact, 52% indicated that they looked at 5 or more apartments. And about half of the respondents complete the search in 30 days.

Number of apartments seen



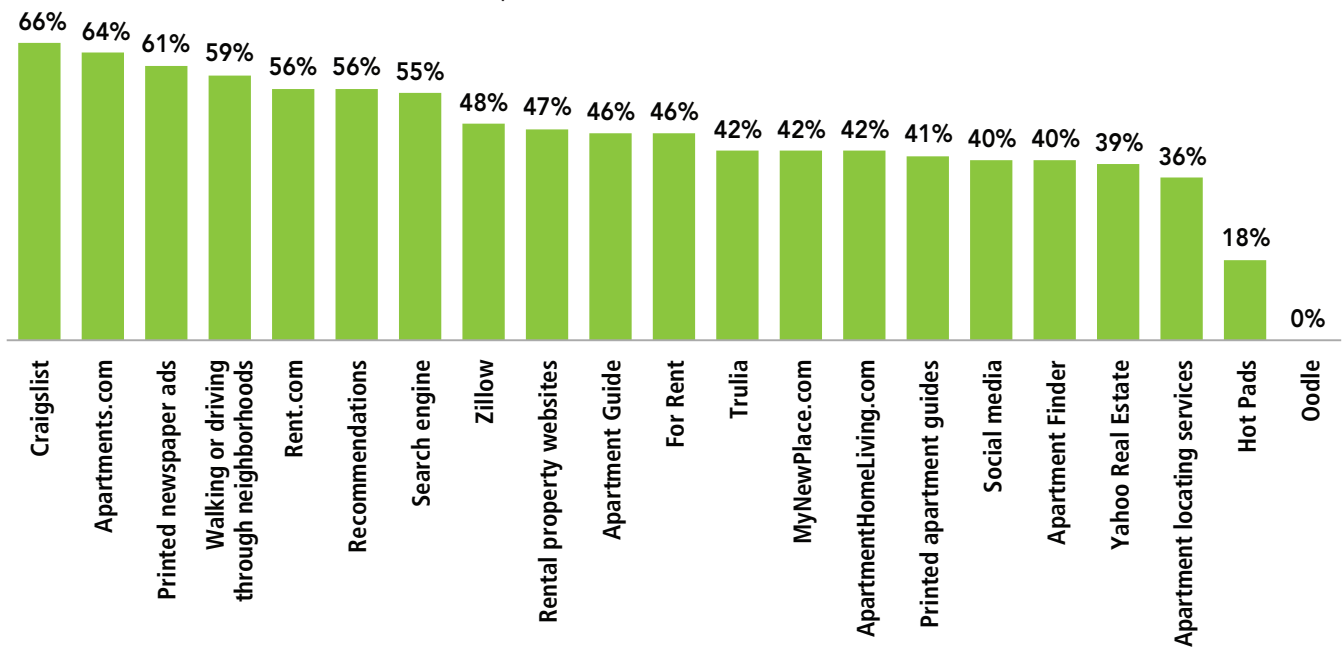
Duration of search, in days



We asked renters to list all the methods they use to contact the property. Phone (67%) is the most popular method of contacting the property with 44% indicating that they walked into the rental office and 40% send email. Live chat and social media are showing some emergence and were selected by 4% and 5% of respondents respectively.

## Renter Attitudes

When asked to rank the sources they used for research by usefulness, renters ranked Craigslist, Apartments.com and printed newspaper ads as the top three most useful sources.



In terms of the usefulness of ILS features – renters ranked photos, floor plans, and availability information as the most useful site features.

About as many people indicated that they love the [moving] process as those who hate it.

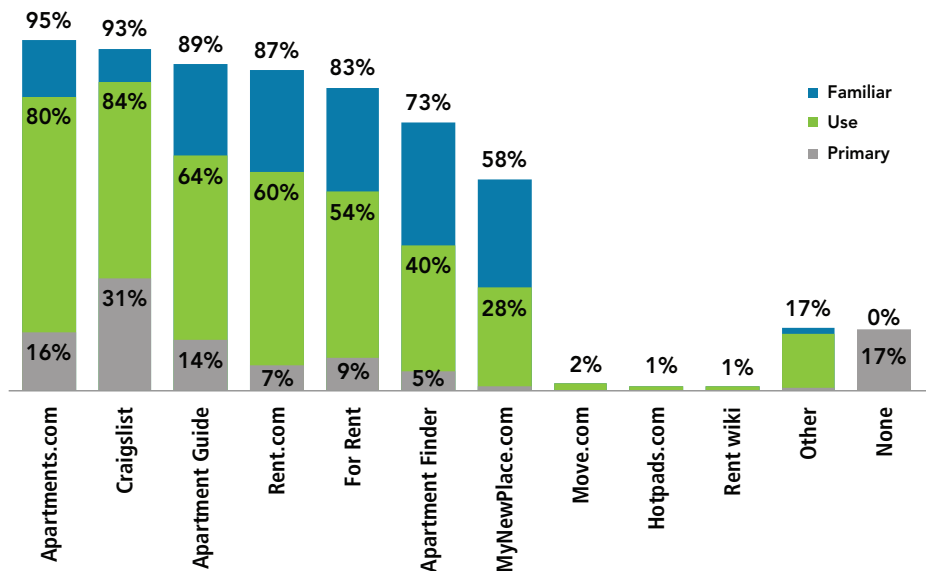
One would think that moving is one of those stressful life events that most renters would hate. Surprisingly, about as many people indicated that they love the process as those who hate it. 53% rated their feelings as neutral. The reasons for disliking the process were listed as being time consuming and costly. And those who enjoyed the process indicated that it was fun, easy and appreciated the opportunity to find a new place.

It is no surprise that cost, location and size are the most important apartment attributes in the selection of an apartment. A little farther down the list are low security deposit and amenities.

## Key Findings from the Property Professional Study

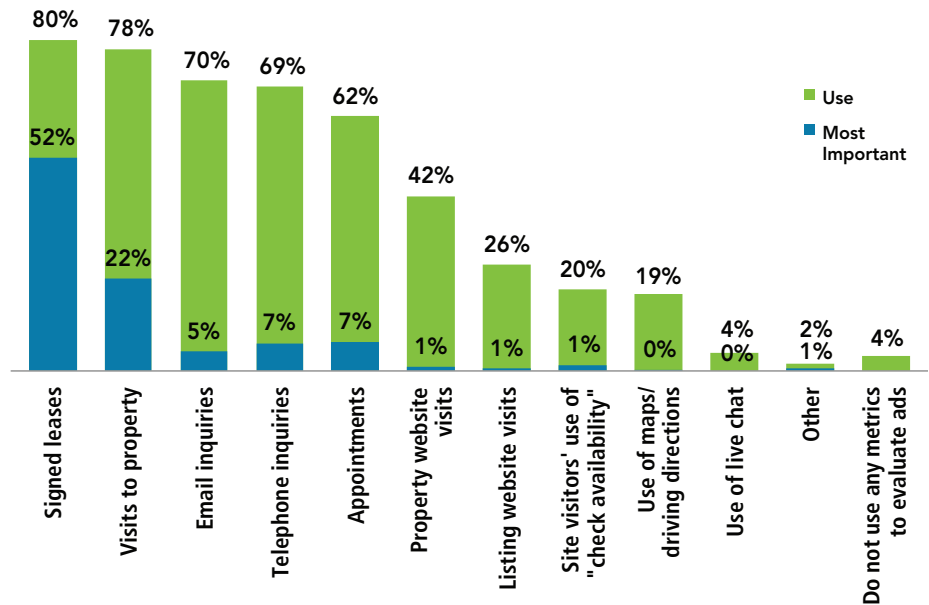
### Advertiser Perceptions

To better understand source awareness versus usage, we asked property professionals 3 things: to select the online advertisers that are familiar, to indicate which of the advertisers they used at least once in the previous 12 months, and then to tell us which advertiser was used most in the previous 12 months. Property professionals are most familiar with Apartments.com and Craigslist. When indicating which site was used most, Craigslist was listed most frequently, with Apartments.com next and then Apartment Guide close behind.

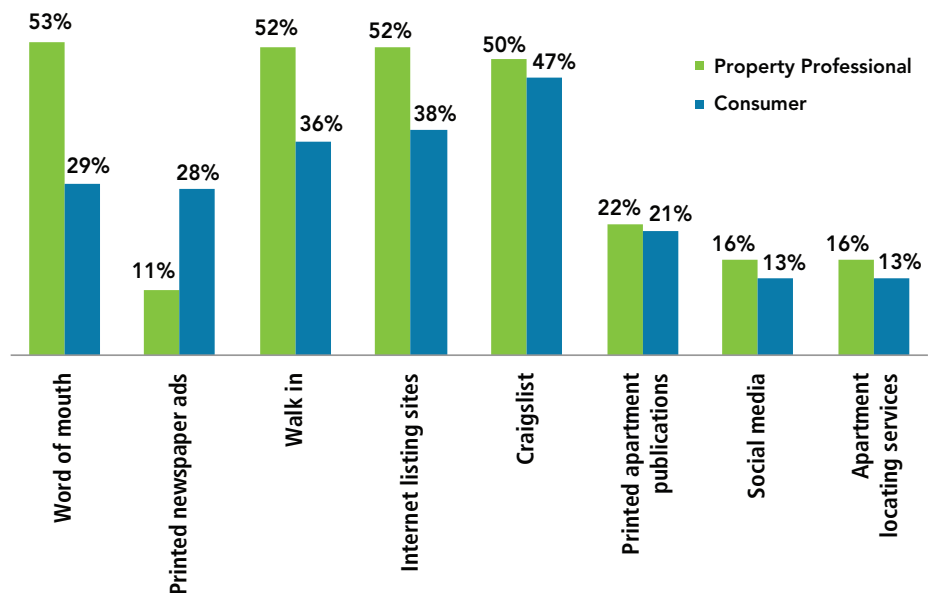


To ensure that we continue to drive value, we also wanted to understand what items are evaluated to determine the effectiveness of advertising. It's very clear that signed leases are seen as the most important success criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of advertising followed by visits to the property. Email inquiries and phone inquiries are rated as used but not

rated as most important which may indicate that they are more difficult to source or convert. This area may be worth re-evaluating if you're using signed leases only since the ability to obtain a signed lease is impacted by many factors from occupancy to the selling ability of staff. Effective advertising drives engagement and interaction. The study revealed that most property professionals use interaction points to assess effectiveness but fail to see the value of email and telephone interactions as a key indicator of the effectiveness of the ads.



The final step was to compare the difference between what the industry believes to be sources used by renters and what renters said they use. Property professionals accurately accessed the usage of Craigslist, printed apartment guides/publications and locator services, while they overestimated the usage of word or mouth, walk in and to a lesser extent ILS. Property professionals significantly underestimated the usage of printed newspaper ads.



## Summary of Findings

- Consumers rank Craigslist, Apartments.com and newspaper ads as the top three most useful sources to use to find their next apartment
- 49% of renters take more than 30 days to make a decision
- 82% of renters look at 3 or more units before deciding on their next home and 52% look at 5 or more units
- While phone is the most popular method of contacting a property, 44% indicate they walk in and 40% sent an email
- 79% of consumers use multiple sources in their search process with an average of 4 sources used
- As many people love the process of finding a new home as those who hate it but the overall feeling is not strong either way
- Property Professionals ranked Craigslist, Apartments.com and then Apartment Guide as their primary sites used (in that order)
- Signed leases are the most important success criterion used to evaluate the effectiveness of their advertising, followed closely by visits to their property
- The property professionals' perception of sources most responsible for property visits doesn't always match what consumer say they use



# Research Approach

## Consumer

- Blind, anonymous online survey conducted in November and December 2011 by Slack and Company using an external consumer panel

- 1,011 completed online surveys (504 multi-family renters)

Note: The results in this summary only reflect the multi-family renter responses

- Criteria
  - Participate in housing decision
  - Currently rent
  - Actively researched new rental in past 90 days
  - Between 18 and 65 years old
  - Live in the United States

The survey margin of error is  $\pm 2.6\%$

## Property Professional

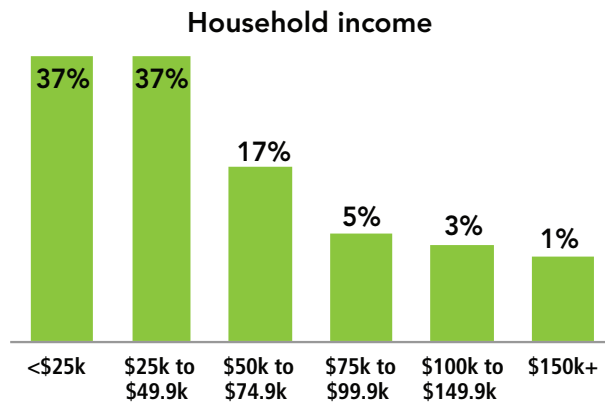
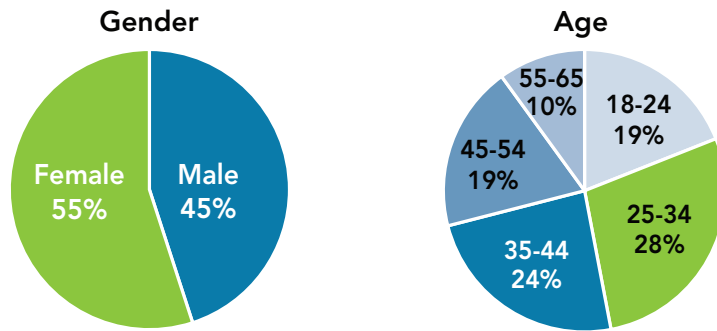
- Email invitation from Think Research (Slack and Company)
- Blind, anonymous online study conducted in October 2011
  - 629 completed online surveys
- Criteria – Industry professionals from property owners to leasing agents

Margin of error + 3.3% for questions asked of total sample, +4.3% for decision makers



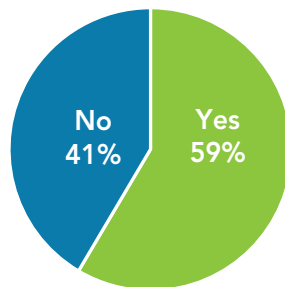
# Respondent Profiles

## Consumer Respondent Demographics



## Property Professional Respondent Profile

### Ad decision-making authority



Title	% of Respondents
Property Manager	62%
Leasing Agent	19%
Regional Manager	7%
Marketing Director	6%
Asset Manager	2%
Property Owner	2%
Marketing Coordinator	2%

## About Us



### Apartments.com

Apartments.com provides unmatched exposure for advertisers by putting their communities in front of more renters in more ways throughout their apartment search resulting in more qualified renter traffic to leasing offices. As the first name in apartment search, Apartments.com drives highly engaged renters to leasing offices throughout the country through best name, search engine domination, Apartment Home Living, featured partnerships and innovative emerging media. Additionally, Apartments.com incorporates the most relevant products to reach renters including access to live chat, real-time rent, online video walk-through demonstrations, professional photography and robust mobile solutions, driving more renters to advertisers' front doors.



### Slack and Company

Slack and Company is an integrated marketing communications and research firm that for 24 years has worked with business marketers, helping to build their brands and generate profitable demand. We combine our deep demand-creation expertise with new marketing technologies and traditional and non-traditional communications pathways to help business-to-business marketers build strong business brands and efficiently identify, find, create, retain and grow profitable customers.





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