

# SEARCH PORTALS STUDY

Wave 3  
Customer Experience Rankings®  
Service Level Rankings



Abstract



## Research Objectives

The Keynote Rankings for Search Portals Web sites are part of a syndicated competitive intelligence program for understanding and improving customer service and service levels of leading Web businesses.

Keynote's mission is to improve eBusiness performance worldwide by providing metrics and insights for customer experience, marketing effectiveness, application service levels and competitive strategies.

## Study Participants

For the study of Search Portals sites, Keynote monitored over 2000 panelists, with 400 visiting each site. The Panelists were profiled for US, online adults across a broad cross section of Internet users. The sites tested were:

- AOL Search
- Ask.com
- Google
- MSN Search
- Yahoo! Search

## Methodology Overview

### Measuring Customer Experience

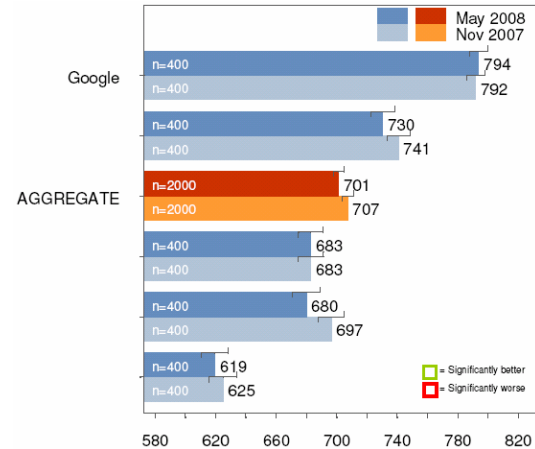
Keynote's approach to customer research involves real consumers performing tasks on target websites, and using Keynote's [WebEffective®](#) application to measure attitudes and behaviors of the users. For this study, the consumers were asked to pursue goals and provide their reactions across a number of areas of site experience.

### Measuring Service Levels

To gather data on the operational excellence of sites in a study, Keynote uses its [Transaction Perspective](#) automated testing agents to mimic the actions of a consumer using the Internet Explorer browser to perform scripted tasks. The agents are deployed through out [Keynote's Global Network](#), and will perform these tasks at least hourly for a 30 day period. The agents track more than 35 performance metrics and collect over 6500 data points to rank the sites in the study on each of seven key performance factors.

## Overall CE Ranking

The overall Keynote Customer Experience Ranking is the highest-level score of customer experience and is based on an aggregate score of site performance across all 250 customer experience indices and metrics measured in the study. The overall ranking shows which sites are most successful in terms of satisfying customers, driving acquisition and supporting the company's brand.



Differences of approximately 21 points or more are significant at the 90% confidence level.

## Specific areas of Success

The best sites are determined by their ability to drive leading business outcomes such as customer satisfaction, brand impact and acquisition. Winners in some of the areas measured are:

Rank	Brand Impact Index
1	Google
2	Yahoo! Search

Rank	Home Page Appeal
1	Yahoo! Search
2	Google

Rank	Result Description Satisfaction
1	Google
2	MSN

## Service Level Results

Using extensive technical quality measurement data and analysis, Keynote benchmarked leading search portals sites in two major categories:

**Reliability** – Measures a site’s ability to service its customers without errors or outages. Reliability is based on detailed measurements focused on two Key Factors:

- Availability
- Outages.

Rank	Reliability
1	Google
2	ASK
3	MSN

**Responsiveness** – Measures a site’s ability to provide highly responsive and consistent page downloads. To obtain the overall Responsiveness Ranking, Keynote evaluates and compares the sites according to their performance on five Key Factors:

- High Speed Response
- Dial-up Response
- Response Time Consistency
- Geographic Uniformity
- Load Handling

Rank	Responsiveness
1	Google
2	Yahoo
3	MSN

### Service Observations –

- The search industry continues to lead the way in overall technical quality. As an example, all of the search sites reported above 99.9% average peak period availability. In other industries, only the top sites are above 99.5%.
- Google continues to have the fastest search results for the broadband user. However, MSN is extremely close, within 3/100ths of a second. For the dial-up user, MSN had a fastest search results.

## Keynote Drivers

Critical insights of the study are derived from understanding why sites rank as they do. Keynote conducted a sophisticated driver analysis to determine which aspects of the site experience had the most significant impact on site success. Keynote competitively benchmarks sites across these drivers – and determines the key factors contributing to success in these areas.

The drivers that had the most influence on brand impact and future use were **Search Quality, Home Page Appeal and Special Features.**

TOP IMPACT DRIVERS	BRAND IMPACT	FUTURE USAGE
	Correlation to Brand Impact Index	Correlation to Usage Index
1. General Search Quality (2)	■■■■■	■■■■■
2. Home Page Appeal (1)	■■■■■	■■■■■
3. Special Features	■■■■■	■■■■■
4. Sponsored Results Satisfaction	■■■■■	■■■■■
5. Perceived Site Performance (6)	■■■■■	■■■■■
6. Results Page Design & Organization (10)	■■■■■	■■■■■
7. Local Search Quality (5)	■■■■■	■■■■■
8. Search Assistance and Suggestions (11)	■■■■■	■■■■■
9. News Search Quality (7)	■■■■■	■■■■■
10. Product Search Quality (12)	■■■■■	■■■■■
11. Image Search Quality (9)	■■■■■	■■■■■
12. Result Descriptions Satisfaction (15)	■■■■■	■■■■■

## Qualitative Analysis

The Keynote research team uses specialized tools to analyze participant comments, identifying and comparing themes across all of the sites in the study.

Here are some comments from our study participants:

*“The 3D download screen was very distracting”*

*“When I wanted to change from shortest time to shortest distance, it did not have that option and I had to back up a page”*

*“seemed to be lots of “ads” interspersed with results. I expected more results linking to news websites, but didn’t see them”*

## Results Availability

This abstract highlights findings from the KCR Search Portals Research Report. The full report contains hundreds of pages that include information not only identifying the best and worst lodging sites, but also providing specific detail about why the sites ranked where they did. Armed with this intelligence, site managers and developers can tune specific aspects of their application to provide better performance to customers than their competition.

## Custom Comparisons

Not included in the study? Need to see where you rate against the top site? Keynote's researchers can create an expansion study to collect the same metrics on your site, and profile your results against the sites in this study. Conducting a study is a straightforward process:

## About Keynote Systems

Keynote Systems, Inc., the Mobile and Internet Performance Authority is the worldwide leader in eBusiness performance management services. Over 2100 corporations and 19,000 individual subscribers rely on Keynote's growing range of measurement, monitoring and customer experience management services to improve eBusiness performance by reducing costs, improving customer satisfaction and increasing profitability. Keynote's products provide enterprises with the tools to align IT and Business goals. To learn more about Keynote's Competitive Research studies, please visit: [http://www.keynote.com/keynote\\_competitive\\_research/](http://www.keynote.com/keynote_competitive_research/)

