

Figure 4. Evolution of Search Visits, With Craigslist

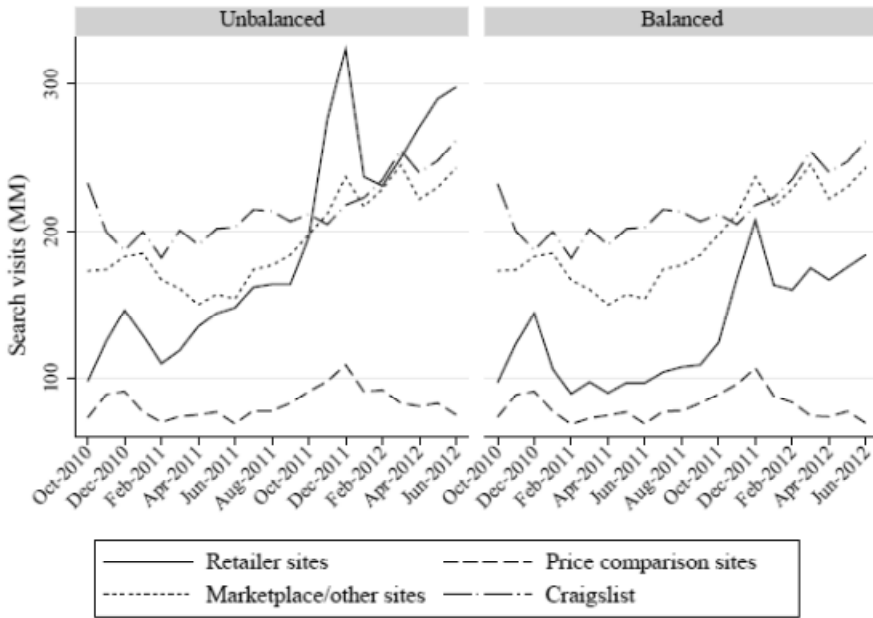


Table 1 provides summary statistics for the total number of product searches conducted on retailer sites, price comparison sites, marketplace/other sites, and Craigslist. In June 2012, consumers using browsers conducted 877 million searches at marketplace/other sites and an additional 737 million searches on Craigslist. Retailer sites amassed 634 million searches, while price comparison sites mustered only 134 million searches.

Table 1 also shows how searches at these platforms vary across heavy searchers, medium searchers, and light searchers.⁴² The bulk of all searches in each category are conducted by so-called heavy searchers—the top 20% most active searchers in terms of the number of searches performed each month. Heavy searchers account for 71% of all product searches at marketplace/other sites, but account for only 57% of all product searches at retailer sites. In contrast, Table 1 also shows that price comparison sites and retailer sites are very similar in terms of their mix of heavy, medium, and light searchers.

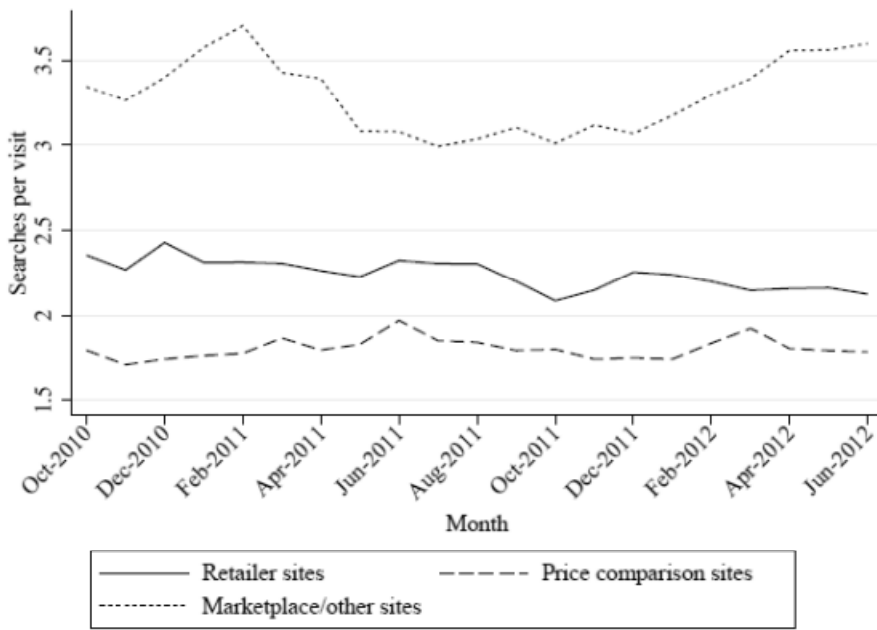
⁴² These categorizations are based on comScore's classification of searchers; comScore defines the heavy searchers as the top 20% most active searchers in terms of the number of searches during a month. The light searchers are defined as the 50% least active searchers. *See id.*

Table 1. Product Searches by User Type, June 2012

	Searches (MM)	Percentage of product searches by user type		
		heavy searcher	medium searcher	light searcher
Retailer sites	634	57	31	11
Price comparison sites	134	60	29	11
Marketplace/other sites	877	71	24	5
Craigslist	737	70	24	6

The total number of searches summarized in Table 1 for June 2012 is the product of search visits—displayed earlier in Figure 3—and the number of searches per visit during that month—displayed in Figure 5. Notice in Figure 5 that, for each category, searches per visit remained relatively constant during the sample period. This implies that trends in total searches for the three categories are similar to those shown for search visits in Figure 2. Figure 5 also demonstrates that a typical search visit at marketplace/other sites results in more searches—slightly more than 3 searches—than at retailer sites—less than 2.5 searches—or price comparison sites (about 1.75 searches).

Figure 5. Evolution of Searches per Visit at Retailer Sites, Price Comparison Sites, and Marketplace/Other Sites



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Product search is dynamic, with evolving technological approaches and considerable turnover in both the importance of different platforms and the identity of key players. Price comparison sites were once the dominant platform for conducting product search. Today, the number of searches conducted on retailer sites and marketplace/other sites dwarf searches at comparison sites. In the beginning, eBay was a marketplace for buyers and sellers of used products, but today, about 70% of the products listed there are new. Amazon was once an online retailer that specialized in selling books and music from its own inventory; today it sells not only a wide array of general merchandise, but it serves as a marketplace where shoppers can search across a growing number of independent sellers. Additional evidence of this evolution is the fact that comScore recently started including product searches at Walmart.com in its qSearch database.

The overall trend—a trend that is continuing into the second decade of the millennium—is that retailer and marketplace/other sites are becoming the “go to” place for conducting product searches. Additionally, shoppers search more intensely at retailer sites and marketplace/other sites, resulting in significantly more overall searches at these sites than at price comparison sites. We note that our data and analysis are based on product search activi-