P QuestionPro

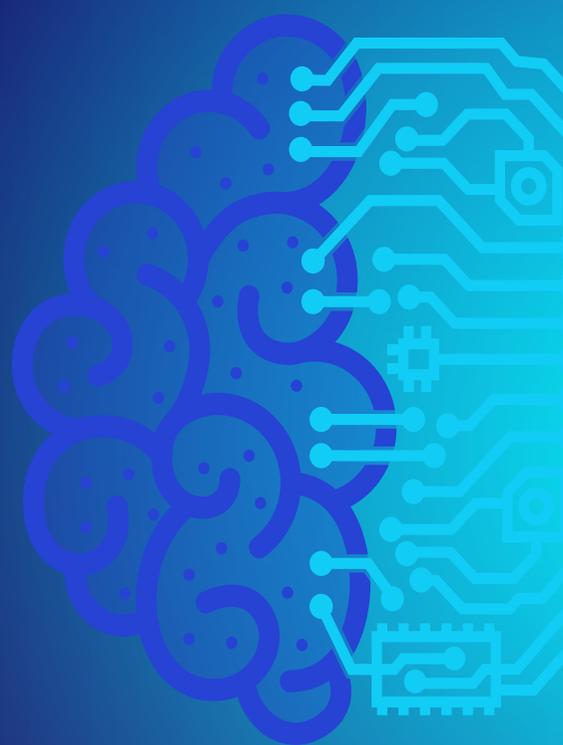# THE HACKER'S GUIDE TO MAXDIFF SCALING

Smarter Choices through intelligent models

Try MaxDiff scaling today at www.questionpro.com

Presented by
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Beyond the Likert Scale: Why Traditional Surveys Fail

In modern market research, the greatest challenge is not gathering data, but distilling **"Truth" from "Noise."** Traditional interval scales are systematically flawed due to **Scale Preoccupation.**
When respondents are given absolute scales, **three primary biases emerge:**

- **Acquiescence Bias**: The tendency to agree or give high ratings to be polite.
- **Central Tendency Bias**: Avoiding extremes and clustering all answers in the "neutral" middle.
- **Cultural Bias**: A "7/10" meaning different things in different global markets.

The MaxDiff Revolution: Relative Comparison

MaxDiff Scaling replaces absolute ratings with **Relative Choice**. It is based on a simple psychological principle: Humans are significantly **more accurate at identifying "extremes"** (the Best and the Worst) than they are at assigning a specific numerical value to an item in isolation. By forcing respondents to choose the most and least important items from a subset, **MaxDiff eliminates "scale tie-ins."** Every item is placed in direct competition, creating a clear, uncrowded hierarchy of value.

Anchored MaxDiff: From Relative to Absolute Insights

While traditional MaxDiff identifies what is "better," it cannot confirm if an item is "important enough to buy." **Anchored MaxDiff** solves this by shifting from a relative scale to an **Absolute Model.**

By establishing an **"Anchor Point,"** attributes are classified into two clear categories:

- **Must-Haves:** Non-negotiable essentials for the customer.
- **Nice-to-Haves:** Secondary benefits that add value but don't drive the primary purchase.
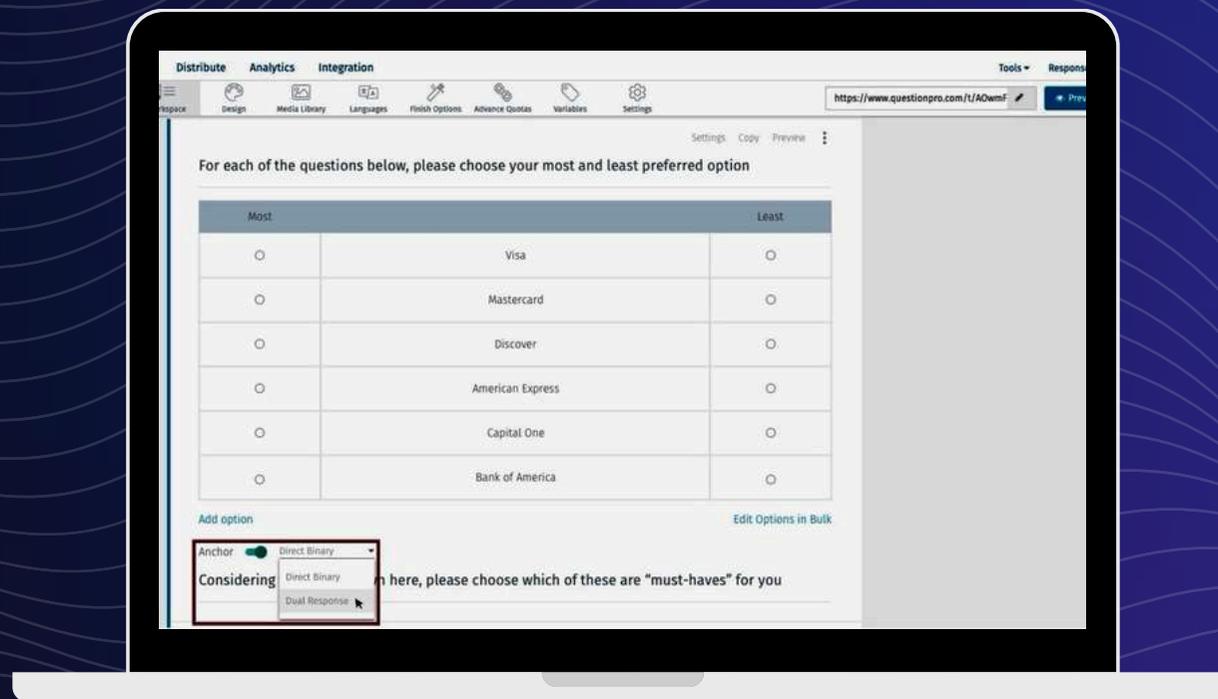
This innovation eliminates analytical blind spots, helping businesses determine if a product truly meets market demand compared to competitors. Whether using **Binary Direct** or **Dual Response** models, it provides a rock-solid foundation for strategic decision-making.

The Zynga Case Study: The Power of Evidence-Based Organizations

The success of global tech giant **Zynga** is a clear testament to the efficacy of MaxDiff. **Rob Aseron**, former Director at Zynga, utilized this methodology for critical decisions, such as selecting game versions for release and naming projects to capture market interest. By using **Share of Preference** to **compare feature demand accurately**, the team avoided guesswork.

Best practice: Anticipate executive questions and prepare **backup data** in advance. This saves time, avoids re-doing research, and lets you give fast, strategic answers to stay ahead in the market.

MaxDiff Scaling is more than a survey technique; it is a **Strategic Framework**. In a business battlefield where resources are finite, the ability to clearly identify the **"Heart of the Matter"** provides a **long-term competitive advantage.**