

Is your current research misleading you?

By Adi Asavaid, Principal, CEO Analytics, LLC



We recently filled out a survey by a well-known national grocery chain. Among the questions: **“On a scale of 1 to 5, how personable are our cashiers?”**

Of course we had to give them a solid “5”. The cashiers at that particularly grocery store are great! They are nice people, smile, say “hello” and “thank you”...

Now, ask me, however, **how important are those cashiers to you?** The answer is a solid “0”. Don’t get me wrong, I really like those

people, but in an ideal world, I would walk towards the exit, a series of sensors would read what I purchased, put them up on a screen, say “Adi, you just purchased \$152.32”, ask me to swipe my card and I’m gone. More... because I am a socially-conscious person, I would have used my own bags when shopping, so everything would be packed already. So, nice people but not relevant to my shopping experience.

“Is this survey really giving me the information I truly need to make decisions?”

That is a question we ask ourselves every day at CEO. In the case of the cashiers... no. The question did not reveal what is truly important to me as a shopper and might even misdirect the grocery chain.

The internet has given marketers the ability to send out surveys to millions of people, get their responses back rapidly and quickly compute the results.

Often overlooked is that the **quality and relevance of the survey** results depends, first and foremost, on the survey technique employed. Speed is secondary. What use is getting answers fast if the results are incomplete, misleading or plain wrong?



Are many of the current survey techniques obsolete? Do the commonly used survey techniques provide accurate or relevant insights to the business owners or product developers to adequately understand the real needs of their consumers?

At CEO Analytics, we strongly believe that the commonly used “1 to 5” scale or “Worst to Best” type of survey technique is woefully inadequate.

Let’s take a simple example of survey for a ‘fast food’ restaurant. Your typical survey will have many attributes, let’s just look at three:

Question: On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is the worst and 5 is the best, please rate our restaurant on your last visit

Attribute	1	2	3	4	5
Speed of Service	Very Slow	Slow	Acceptable	Fast	Very Fast
Cleanliness	Very Dirty	Dirty	Acceptable	Clean	Very Clean
Quality of Food	Very Bad	Bad	Acceptable	Good	Very Good

This technique one big advantage: it is easy to compute the results.

But, whether you get 100, 1,000 or a million surveys, you’ll notice that this happens:

- Because all of the attributes are presented at the same time, the person creates a mental model (e.g., did I find this place faster than dirtier?) that introduces bias right from the start.
- Most of the responses will fall between 3 and 4 with few outliers.
- All of the attributes being independent of each other, the responses will not indicate the importance of each factor.

As a result, the business owner gets inconclusive results that won’t lead to proper decisions or actions.



We created a more accurate, actionable survey

At CEO Analytics we changed the survey technique radically. Respondents are face with a single question in the form of a slider. This technique not only forces the customer to think about his/her response, but also **gives us both the evaluation and the relative importance of each factor.**

For example, a person will see this slider:

What is more important to you?

Cleanliness Fast Service

Please move the cursor as needed

Then he/she might see this other (random) one:

What is more important to you?

Fast Service Tasty Food

Please move the cursor as needed

This is a “forced choice model” and it has many important advantages over traditional “1 to 5 Scales”

- Each slider question is presented individually, eliminating the bias that results from seeing all the factors together.
- The technique forces the respondent to actually think a bit more about what he/she is answering.
- The questions and the place where each attribute appears on the slider are randomized, eliminating any order biases.
- We specifically program each survey to last 3 – 4 minutes. However, we test all the different product attributes that our clients want to consider, eliminating any content bias, also implicit in the “1 to 5 Scales”.
- Disadvantages? Calculations are lengthier and more complex than for other research, but we have developed the algorithms to speed them up and still deliver accurate and meaningful data.

A truly unique approach to reaching consumers. In order to provide really actionable results, we can also include relevant promotional or marketing actions. So, for example, a respondent might also see the following sliders:

What would you prefer?

BOGO (Buy One Get One) Percentage Coupon

Please move the cursor as needed

Followed by another random one:

What would you prefer?

Percentage Coupon Free Item Next Week

Please move the cursor as needed

Naturally, we can segregate any variable by any variable. Our clients would know, among many things:

- What attributes do any group absolutely love. For example, moms with kids might value cleanliness above everything but younger men might value speed.



- Among moms who value cleanliness, the preference is for a BOGO but among older men the preference is for a small discount today rather than a bigger discount next week.

And a long etcetera.

Finally, our survey includes the usual battery of demographic information (e.g., age, gender, presence of children...) and is presented to our customers using a custom-made dashboard that includes not only standard reports but “ad-hoc” ones that the client requires.

In closing, we believe that CEO’s methodology of “Disjointed Conjoint Forced Choice” provides a very accurate reading of what customers truly love in a 100% actionable way.

Would you like a demo or more information about how CEO Analytics’ combination of Disjointed Conjoint Analysis and proprietary algorithms can increase customer retention for your business? Drop us a line at info@ceo-bi-analytics.com.