

Further reading on MaxDiff scales

In Chapter 4, we briefly mentioned the MaxDiff scale. MaxDiff is an abbreviation of *maximum difference scaling*. Maximum difference scaling provides a set of attributes and requests the respondent to indicate what is most and least important. The idea is that the respondents evaluate all possible pairs of items within the displayed set of items and from these choose the two items that are most and least important, thereby indicating the maximum difference in preference or importance. Figure A4.1 shows an example of such a scaling.

What is the most and least important attribute of the Apple iPhone?		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ease-of-use	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Speed	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Design	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Size	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Durability	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure A4.1 Example of the MaxDiff scale.

To some extent, MaxDiff scaling is similar to the semantic differential scale where respondents indicate the degree to which an adjective applies. The difference

however, is that the MaxDiff scale reveals the relative importance of the items. When a respondent answers a set of semantic differential scales, the researcher does not know what the key items are, while the MaxDiff scale can reveal.

A disadvantage of the MaxDiff scale is that the resulting data cannot be analyzed easily using standard software. It requires creating utility curves to determine how many times an item was or was not preferred (over the all respondents). Specialized software programs, such as MaxDiff/Web System (<http://www.sawtoothsoftware.com/products/maxdiff/>) are available to thoroughly analyze the information obtained through MaxDiff. However, for a basic analysis, it is fairly easy to produce simple counts by using SPSS.

See <http://www.sawtoothsoftware.com/download/techpap/maxdiff.pdf> for further information.