SURVEY DESIGN · FIELD NOTE

A research survey is an *instrument*. *Not a form*.

A FORM

Collects *fact* and answers.

AN INSTRUMENT

Built to *uncover*, test, decide.

The difference is invisible in the spreadsheet. It shows up only in the *decision you make next*.

REAL QUESTION, LIGHTLY DISGUISED

Watch what some surveys actually *ask*.

Q4 · 7-PT SCALE

"Considering this brand's commitment to sustainability, how much does its environmental purpose increase your preference for the brand?"

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Reads fine. Sounds rigorous. A **brand-strategy decision** rides on the answer.

Hold that question for a second.

THE TRAP

No consumer can *answer that*.

To answer honestly, the respondent would have to:

01 Isolate one value: sustainability.

02 Trace its causal effect on their own preference.

03 Quantify that effect on a scale.

Nobody can do that. Not for your brand. Not for any brand. ***The question asks the respondent to be the researchers.***

WHAT HAPPENS INSTEAD

The mind answers *something easier*.

"How much does sustainability increase my preference for this brand?”

*"Do I **like** this brand?"*

You receive a number. You label it **purpose-driven preference**. ***It was never about the purpose at all.***

KAHNEMAN NAMED THIS

Substitution. *Quiet*. Constant.

Thinking, Fast and Slow | Chapter 38

A **hard question** gets silently replaced by an **easier one**.

The respondent never notices the swap. Neither do you, the answer looks perfectly reasonable on its surface.

That's what makes it dangerous, not obvious.

THE DIAGNOSIS

You wanted System 2. You got *System 1*.

DESIGNED FOR

System 2

Considered. Deliberate. Slow. The construct you set out to measure.

YOU RECEIVED

System 1

Fast. Intuitive. Automatic. Returned a number without ever engaging the question.

Both feel like answers. ***The decision can't tell which one it received.***

THE OBVIOUS FIX THAT ISN'T

"Just tell them to think *harder*."

> *"~~Please consider this question carefully before answering.~~"*

Evidence shows: telling people to think carefully **doesn't reliably change** how they process the question.

> *You can't instruct System 2 into existence. Fix the instrument instead.*

THE PRINCIPLE THAT HELPS

Measure a *System 2* construct with a *System 1* method.

"How does sustainability affect preference?"

PART 1	PART 2	PART 3
Awareness	Choice	Association

Decompose the hard question into parts a fast mind can answer accurately, ***then reassemble the inference yourself***.

THE SAME QUESTION, REBUILT

Three clean signals.
Zero introspection.

1	"Which brands are known for environmental commitment?"	AWARENESS
2	"Which brand would you choose?"	PREFERENCE · BY CHOICE
3	"How strongly does this brand fit 'cares about the environment'?"	ASSOCIATION

None of these asks the respondent to be the researcher.

THEN YOU DO THE HARD PART

The respondent never connects the *dots*.

RESPONDENT

Three short answers.

Recognition. Choice. Association. Each one a fast, automatic judgment.

RESEARCHERS

Model the relationship.

Does environmental association actually move preference across the full sample? That is the System 2 work.

It belongs to the researcher, the design, and the data. ***Never the respondent.***

HOW TO DO THIS EVERYWHERE ELSE

Engineer the *instrument*.

- [ ] Force **trade-offs** instead of asking for weights.
- [ ] Use **comparison** and **anchoring**, not abstract scales.
- [ ] **Rotate** question order. **Pretest** every item.
- [ ] Use **validated scales**; measure close to the moment.
- [ ] *Don't outsource the thinking.*

BUILD THE INSTRUMENT

Then *trust* the decision.

build not fill

A good research survey doesn't ask people to do the researcher's job. It asks what they can answer, and infers the rest with rigour.

Which of your current questions is secretly asking the respondent to be the researcher?