

December 2025

# Can AI moderate? The pros and cons of AI-moderated consumer interviews

# Current Landscape



**bolt**

 **outset.ai**

 **Conveo**

 **Voxpopme®**

 **discuss**

 **sightx**

 **glaut\***

 **Strella**

 **Listen**

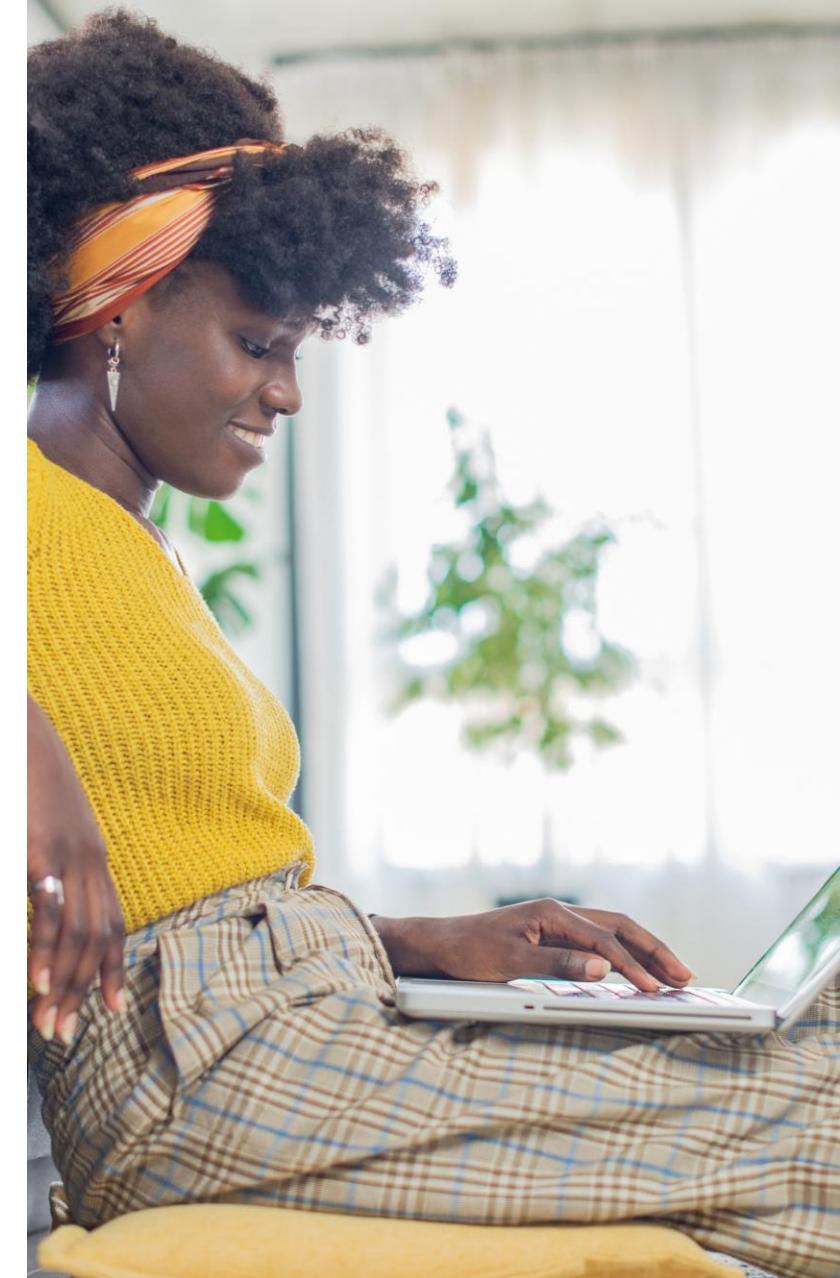
 **SWAYABLE**

 **Maze**

 **yasna**

# What We Did

- ✓ Pilot with one platform
- ✓ Replicated a previous qualitative study from 2022
- ✓ N=10, completed AI-moderated interviews
- ✓ Human-moderated focus groups/IDIs to discuss AI experience
- ✓ Mix of Gen Z, millennials, and Gen X

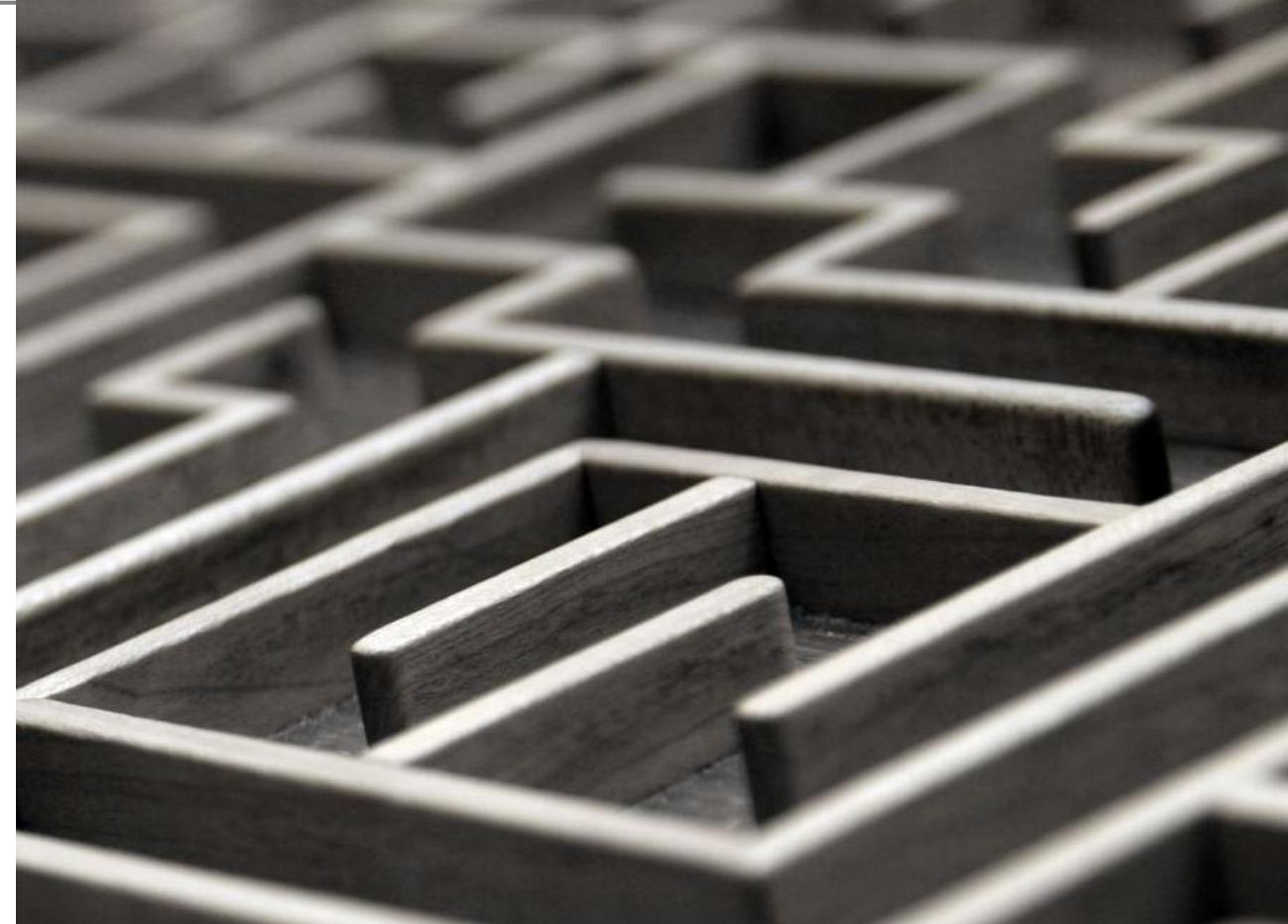


# Platform Considerations



# Front end logistics/limitations

- AI guide writing
- No branching
- Newer interface/bugs
- Programming/testing guide
- Intro
- Double counting respondents
- Didn't allow changes when live



# Backend tools and output limitations



- Transcriptions couldn't be downloaded, only copied
- Format of summary document limited to pdf or ppt
- Customization in summary reporting is cumbersome
- Report was lacking in detail and relevant findings

# Respondent Experience and Assessment

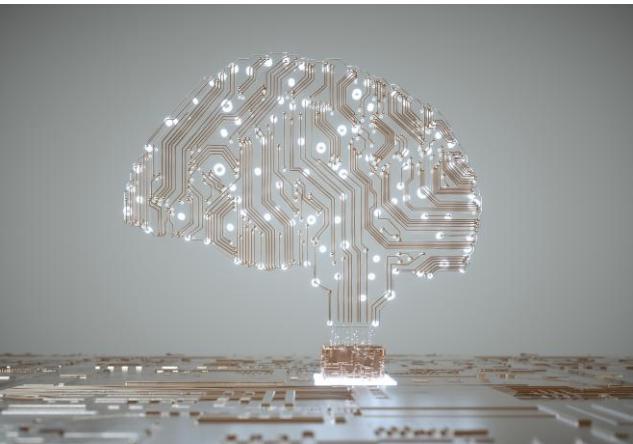


# Attitudes toward AI



Respondents across age groups are **negative to mixed** on AI – most see it as having potential value but also **significant drawbacks**

- Environmental impact
- Job displacement
- Ethical considerations
- Bias
- Privacy



However, all but one respondent **use** it for at least something in their daily and or work lives, usually to save time/be more efficient

- Writing
- Academic support
- Job support
- Transcription
- Meal/travel planning
- Fun

# Overall impression of AI moderating

Overall reaction is negative to neutral, with descriptions of the experience as **awkward**, **impersonal**, **robotic**, and **unsatisfying** compared to human interaction.



# Overall Impression



# There were strong negatives

## Repetitive and redundant

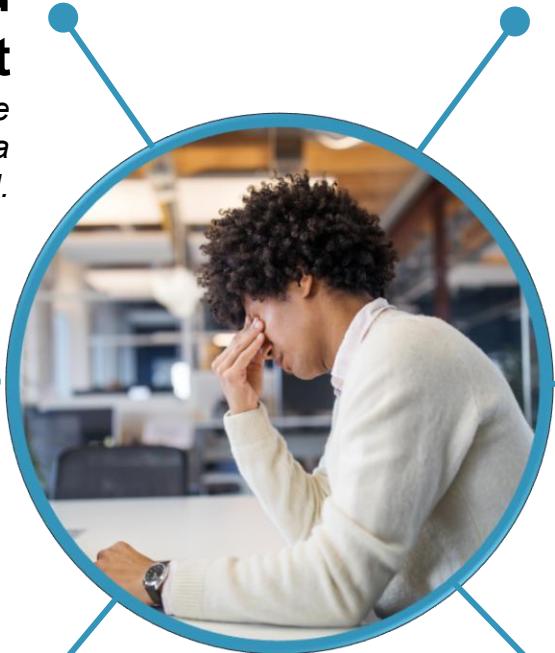
*There were a lot of times where I, maybe I answered like too much in one question, and then it would ask me a question on something that I had already answered.*

## Afraid to pause/think

*I was afraid to like pause and collect thoughts for fear that it would think I wasn't going to say anything else.*

## Impersonal

*Very, very impersonal... It feels more like someone's going like going down a checklist*



## Tone/voice inconsistencies/ lags

*It changed throughout... sometimes it would go into accents, and the volume would get really low, and I'd like turn my volume up, and then maybe a minute later it would get like loud all of a sudden.*

## Tech issues

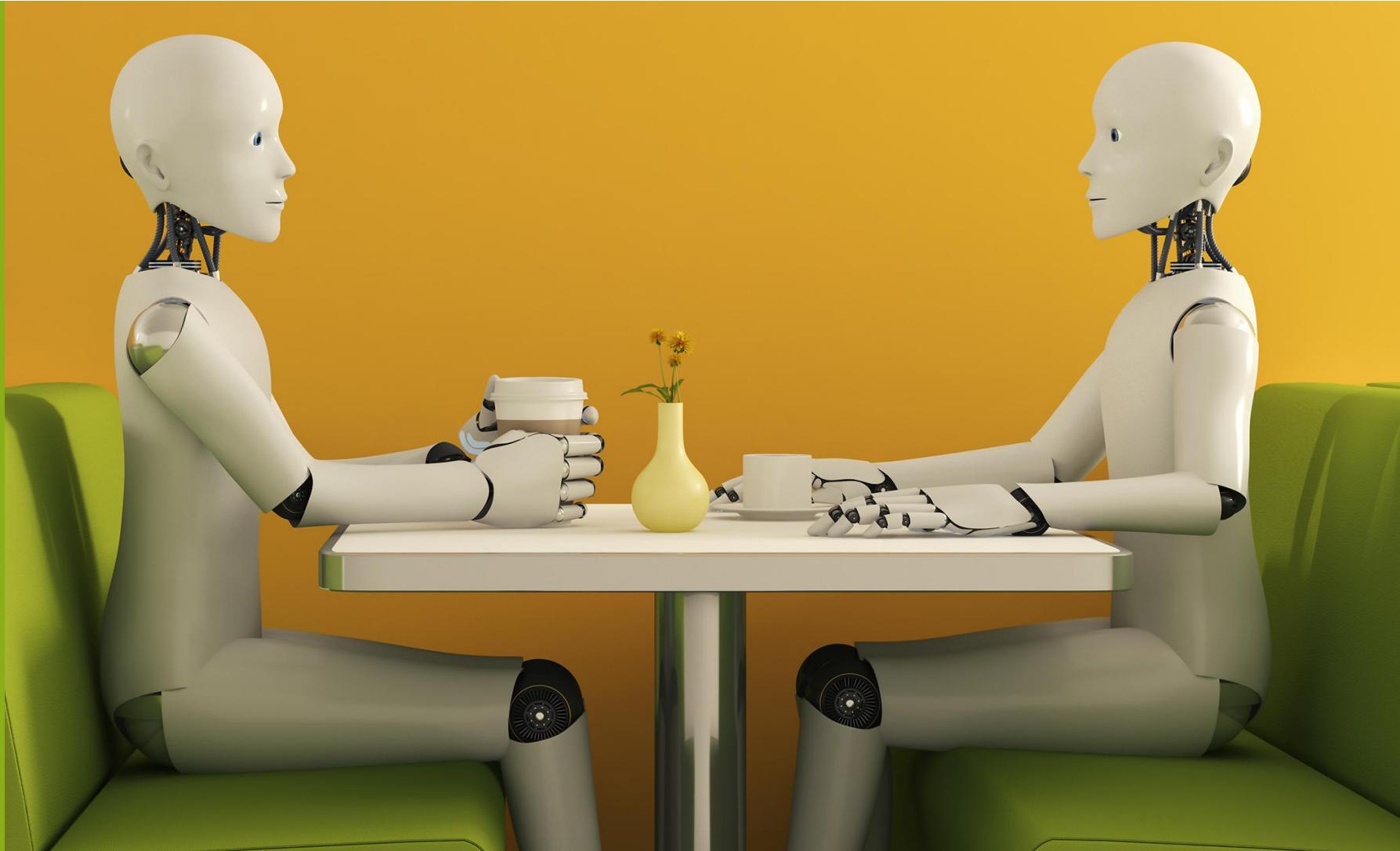
*I was like waiting and waiting and I was like, when is this thing going to start?*

## Too scripted/ Non-responsive

*I feel like I gave a couple of, couple of threads of like, if you're going to pull on something, here's something to like pull on, and it did not do that.*

# There were also some lukewarm positives

- Intro helpful
- Ability to clarify
- Stays on topic
- Summarization
- Occasional probes
- Accessibility
- Patience
- Politeness
- Convenience
- **Got basic info**



# At the end of the day, basic results were consistent

## Consistency with human-moderated

- Sources for finding therapists
- Priorities in therapy
- Top advantages of teletherapy
- Top disadvantages of teletherapy
- Recommendations for a hybrid approach



## What AI-moderating may have missed

- Human-moderated generated more expansive, in-depth, and emotional quotes
- Some nuance/depth missed in the discussion of the disadvantages of teletherapy
- Missed some of the challenges in finding a therapist

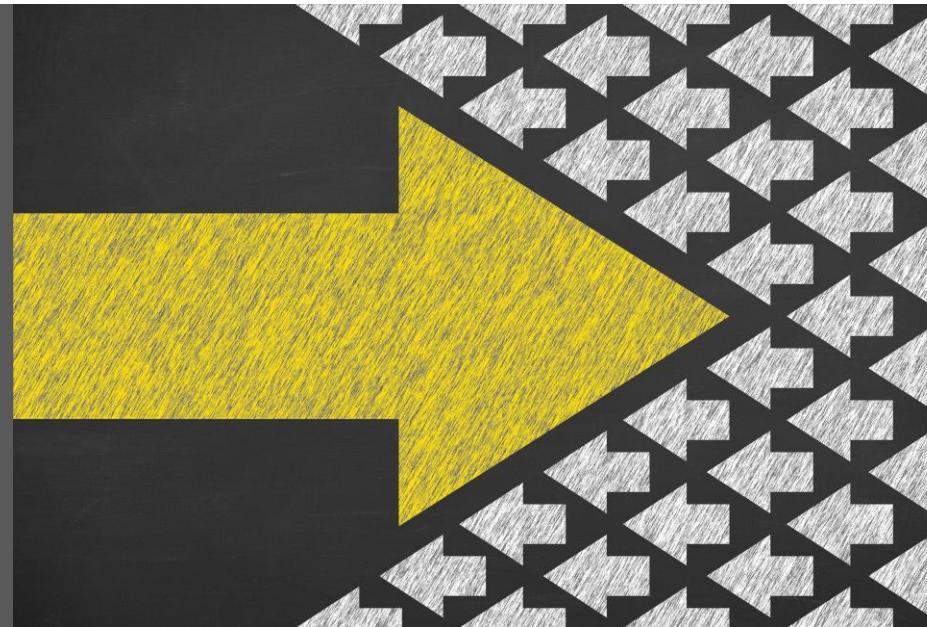


# Conclusions



# AI vs. Human Moderation

All respondents  
**strongly prefer**  
**human**  
**moderation**, and...



Nearly all  
respondents would  
be **open to future**  
**AI moderation**

# Human vs. AI moderation



# AI vs. Human Moderation

Participants acknowledge AI-moderating succeeds in gathering **basic, surface-level** information relevant to the research topic...

But they emphasize **significant limitations in depth, nuance, and quality** compared to human moderation.



## When AI could work

- Simple/straightforward topic
- Don't need to go too deep
- Respondent convenience/reach
- High volume
- Less moderator bias



## When AI will not work

- Complex
- Want deep or emotional feedback
- More nuance/detail
- Need flexibility/branching
- Sensitive topic, want folks to open up

Happy to talk  
more, so feel free  
to reach out!

Amy Rey  
[amy@zeldisresearch.com](mailto:amy@zeldisresearch.com)

