

December 2025

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

Current Landscape

bolt

 **outset.ai**

 **Conveo**

 **Voxpopme®**

 **discuss**

sight·x

glaut*

Strella

 **Listen**

 **SWAYABLE**

 **Maze**

yasna

What We Did

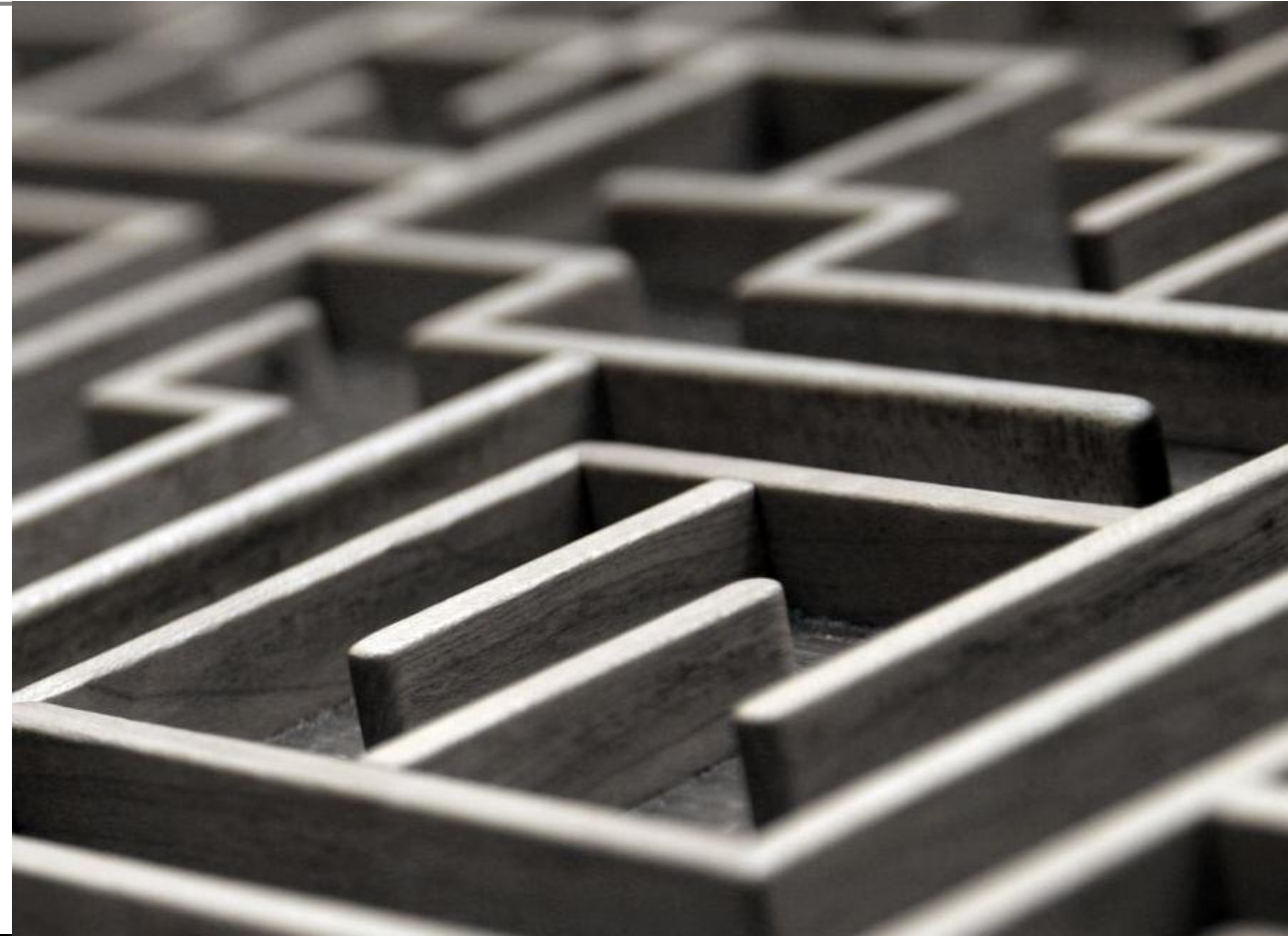
- ✓ Pilot with one platform
- ✓ Replicated a previous qualitative study from 2022
- ✓ N=10, completed AI-moderated interviews
- ✓ Human-moderated focus groups/IDIs to discuss AI experience
- ✓ Mix of Gen Z, millennials, and Gen X



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

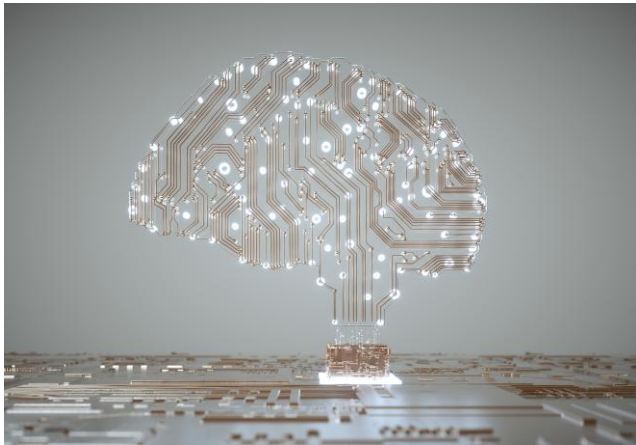
Respondent Experience and Assessment

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.

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.

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.

Tech issues

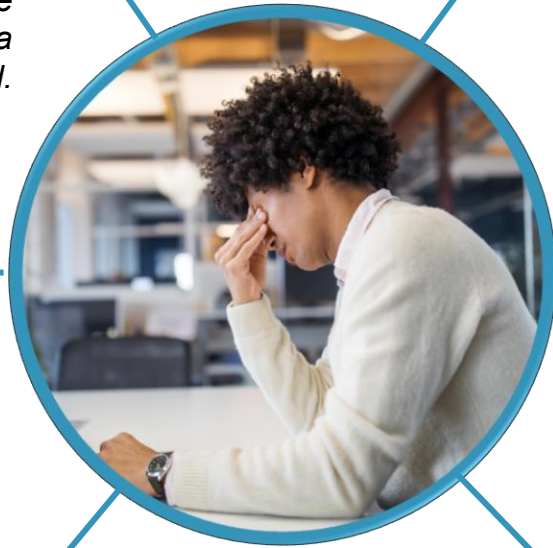
I was like waiting and waiting and I was like, when is this thing going to start?

Impersonal

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

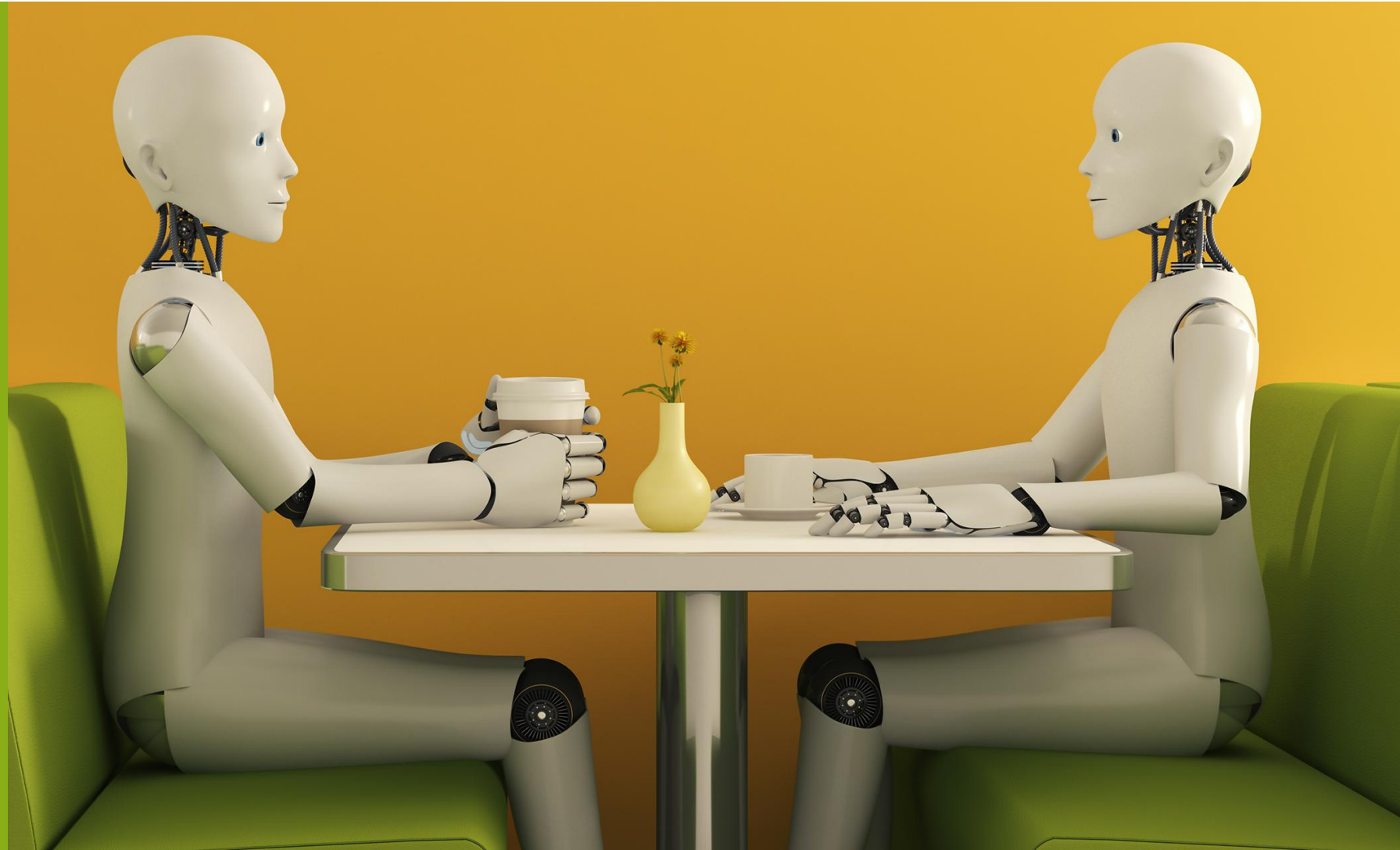
Too scripted/ Non-responsive

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

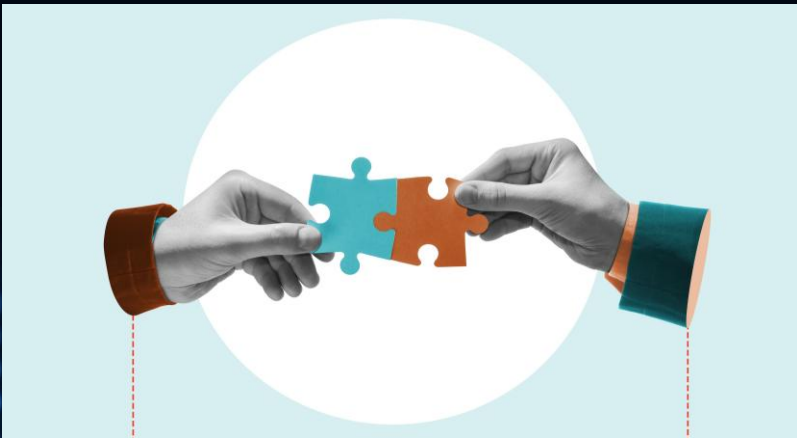
- Intro helpful
- Ability to clarify
- Stays on topic
- Summarization
- Occasional probes
- Accessibility
- Patience
- Politeness
- Convenience
- **Got basic info**



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

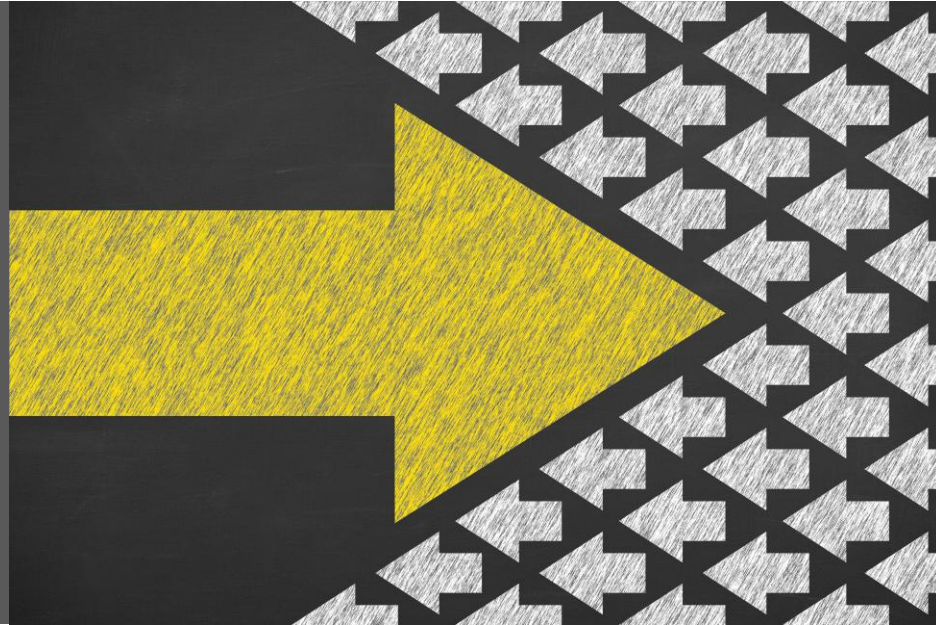
- Human-moderated generated more expansive, in-depth, and emotional quotes
- Some nuance/depth missed in the discussion of the disadvantages of teletherapy
- Missed some of the challenges in finding a therapist



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!

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