



# Krisis

The New Qualitative  
Approach from Ipsos



January 2005 [www.ipsos.com/ideas](http://www.ipsos.com/ideas)

## **Waking the Soldier Kali**

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## **From the Pleasure Principle to Disillusioned Consumption**

Personal attitudes to consumption have changed radically: the public is disenchanted, anxious, and disloyal. Qualitative research must adapt to this new age of consumer disillusionment.

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## **This Discontinuous, Partial, Arrhythmic Loyalty... That We Call Disloyalty**

Ipsos has foreseen the erosion and potential weaknesses of projective techniques, which are directly bound to a relational contract between the public and the brand that has changed. This understanding constitutes the soul of Krisis, which has been strategically constructed around the idea of conflict.

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## **Giving Recruitment (New) Value**

The development of the new Krisis protocol represented an opportunity to take a fresh look at the recruitment of the actors, recruitment staff, and consumers. Enriched and (re)valued, the recruitment process incorporates a preliminary interview before the qualitative group session.

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## **Moderating Krisis, A New Approach: Moderator, Agitator, Agent Provocateur.**

To moderate a Krisis group demands a new and special approach, halfway between a private conversation and the use of group dynamics. To allow conflict to take place means both staging it and defining the conditions under which it will unfold.

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## **Faster, Further, Simpler: Forwards!**

The Krisis analysis does not stop at commenting on the progress of the group; it takes sides. Krisis is not just an original method, it is a pre-session appraisal undertaken in co-operation with our clients in order to give them a post-session understanding.

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## **What Our Clients Think**

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## Waking the Soldier Kali By Jean-Marc Lech

The two words that describe and speak of our consumer questioning methods are older than our profession itself!

A century before Gallup invented extensive surveys (polls) and more than a century before Merton developed intensive surveys (focus groups), the words quantitative and qualitative started to take root in language.

Consider: qualitative analyses (1842) determine the nature of the constituents that make up a substance, but without taking account of their proportions; they belong to the realm of chemistry. In turn, quantitative analyses (1845) identify and measure the qualities of the constituents of this same substance.

One hundred and fifty years later, we are still trying to understand the mystery of how social groups function. Of course, as these groups have become accustomed to our investigations, the way we go about things has become increasingly sophisticated. As far as the qualitative component of our job is concerned, the mixture of functionalism and projection – focus groups playing games charged with precise codes – is suffering from fatigue.

The failures due to this fatigue are precise and identifiable: composition and recruitment of the groups, moderation of meetings, and analysis of the identified content. The routinisation of these three elements, which are central to our work, causes studies to lose much of their effectiveness. In recognition of this, Ipsos is updating our qualitative approach.

Krisis is the product of these observations. We have to reawaken the soldier Kali and give her the weapons she needs to fight today's battles. This special edition of *Ipsos Ideas* proposes a new interpretation of an age-old word.



Ipsos

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Ipsos Ideas is published by the Ipsos Group, the world's third largest survey-based market research company. Published five times a year, Ipsos Ideas is also accessible from [www.ipsos.com/ideas](http://www.ipsos.com/ideas).

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## From the Pleasure Principle to Disillusioned Consumption

By Yves Bardon

The development of marketing research methodologies, the qualitative domain in particular, is founded on the assumption that consumer society was born when the pleasure principle took over from the need principle.

This state of affairs is positive for industrialists and for advertising agencies, not to mention the research institutes. The consumer adopts an attitude of well-meaning curiosity – he “spends,” in the sense that he is no longer content to buy what is useful to him but instead purchases what appeals to him – as Georges Bataille’s analyses proposed.<sup>1</sup>

The pleasure principle results in a relatively direct contract between the brand, the media, and the sender of the message and the consumer who buys, watches, or votes for whatever it is that seduces him, speaks about it, and speaks out without hiding anything when asked about his motivations, his hesitations, and his desires.

Introduced during the 1970s, at a time when consumer society was booming, projective methods continue to be founded on this research and its implications. They postulate that it is necessary to adopt a projective approach in order to liberate speech, bypass the superego, short-circuit the unconscious, and await a genuine insight into the factors that lead to decisions. This has given rise to methods involving the association of ideas, projections, analogies, role-playing, and anticipation; the qualitative tools used to go beyond the limits of rationalisation and self-justification. However, the quality of the projective methods is dependent on the quality of the contract (the desire to tell the truth) that links the consumer with the source of the message (brand, media, politician, etc.).

### A Radical Change in the Relationship with Consumption

Is this contract lasting and sustainable? In reality, it corresponds to an initial, idealised, experience of consumer society. However, it is changing quickly, as a function of a whole set of factors that are liable to interfere with the pleasure principle:

- A vast range of offerings that complicate choice and make decisions between products more and more frequent (hyper-choice).
- The desire to differentiate oneself, increasingly individual, fragmented behaviour encouraged by brands that target “micro-niches.”

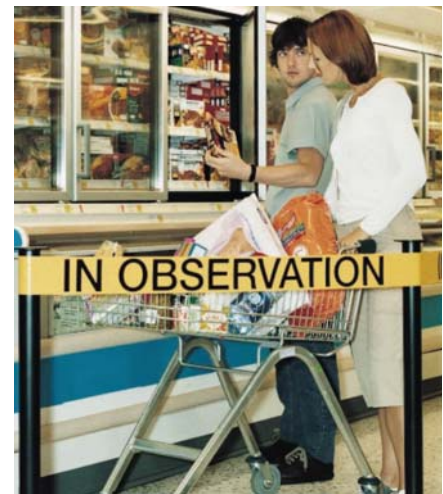
- A less naïve relationship with advertising which has become a sort of “necessary evil;”<sup>2</sup> after initially being seduced by the showmanship, self-taught consumers now decode communications more quickly.
- Market research studies have become an everyday reality: consumers know that they are being watched and monitored, and, over time, have acquired evasive skills.
- The popularisation of brand strategies; consumers understanding that they are targets because they see what goes on behind the scenes in the marketing or political world and consequently try to “fool the enemy.”

Seen in this light, France reveals another feeling. After the pure pleasure of consuming, after a feeling of product offering and advertising redundancy, the relationship with consumption has undergone a radical change: the public is disenchanted, anxious, and disloyal. These sentiments have repercussions for professional marketing researchers.

This attitude, which can be observed in France, is subdivided into three periods and can be extrapolated to the international level.

After the dynamism induced by spending, we are now witnessing a period of retention, of economy in every sector (money, information, spontaneity, etc.), and of negotiations or delusions that cloud the contract.

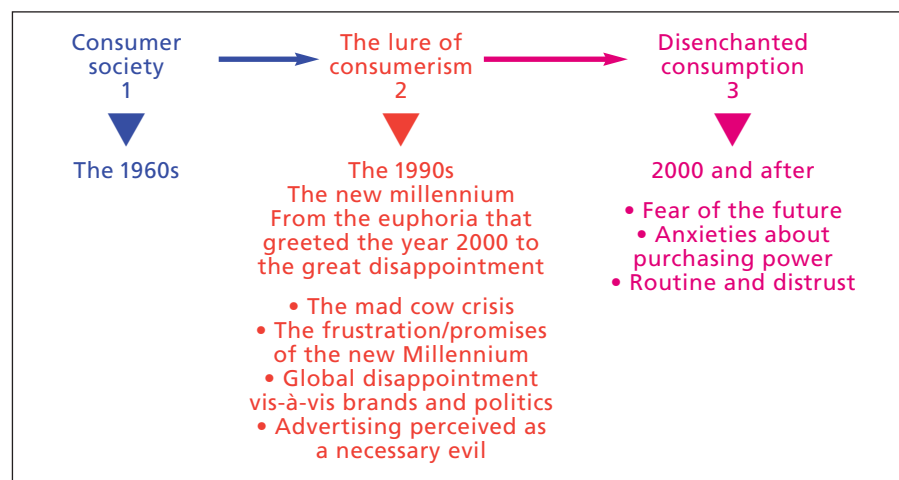
Even if *No Logo* is not a slogan that everyone can share and the “anti-advertising”



movements have remained marginal, consumer attitudes have changed: traceability, an ethical dimension, and a desire to take precautions have hardened perceptions of brands and messages.<sup>3</sup> Consumers no longer feel guilty. Surfing from brand to brand just as they surf from TV channel to TV channel, consumers are, above all, there to take in offers and make choices like free electrons, intent on benefiting from what is available.

### Qualitative Studies Must Adapt

How can we track this disloyalty in the light of the three factors that engender it? That is, the return to the reality principle, which is related to an unpromising economic



### From the Pleasure Principle to Disillusioned Consumption

context and a general mood of pessimism; refuge in the politically correct, which may result in self-censure and a schism between public pronouncements and real actions (which the Chirac/Le Pen duel in April 2001 was emblematic of in France); and the ground gained through dissimulation, encouraged by reality TV in particular, which places the emphasis on the influence exerted by Mr. or Mrs. Anyone, who win because they know how to be more manipulative than others.

Qualitative research now has to adapt to this third period, the age of consumer

disenchantment characterised by individuals who have less and less belief in brands and tend to dissimulate and/or manipulate by giving the researcher a message which is actually intended for the brand. Consumers have become strategists whose speech is characterised by imagery, which is no longer really a circumlocution, but has instead tended to form a code (e.g., the language

of reality TV). The imaginary representation has become a general-purpose mode of expression that is used by everyone.

These considerations lie at the origin of Krisis.

<sup>1</sup> George Bataille, *La notion de dépense*. (Paris: Editions de Minuit), 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Ipsos-Australia. "Advertising and Society, the French and Advertising." November 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo*. (London: Flamingo), 2001.

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## This Discontinuous, Partial, Arrhythmic Loyalty... That We Call Disloyalty

By Thierry Chanchorle

The projective methods used to gather information in qualitative groups were introduced and developed during earlier market phases, that is to say, during the period of consumer society, then of consumers. Their relevance and effectiveness are directly related to the nature of the personal contract that, at one time, bound the public to brands, institutions, and other advertisers.

### Anticipating Erosion

In our opinion, this contract has undergone a profound change.

With the media exposure of their crises, brands have inevitably revealed fault lines and profound inconsistencies among their constituent parts: institutions towards their civic undertakings, trademarks towards their clientele, companies towards their internal audiences, etc.

The public has learned to understand itself and its multifarious social embodiments in terms of what brands communicate to us: citizens, economic actors, private individuals, consumers.... The public's relationship with brands has become more complex and more ambivalent. Their words and messages have become more difficult to decode and anticipate.

Projective methods therefore run the risk of revealing only a single, socially acceptable half-truth.

### From a Mechanical Model to a Dynamic Model

Ipsos wanted to anticipate the erosion and potential weaknesses of qualitative methods. Therefore, to complete our range of qualitative services, we developed a new qualitative protocol, Krisis, intentionally and strategically constructed around the central notion of conflict.

Indeed, during the honeymoon period – that is to say, within the context of a fuller, more hedonistic relationship with brands – crisis

precipitated the break between consumers and brands. Nowadays, crisis structures and organizes the brand relationship. Crisis generates discontinuous, partial, arrhythmic loyalty... that we call disloyalty. And our task now is to understand it.

Krisis is based on two assumptions: (1) crisis is a normal state, which can only be resolved on a transient, elusive basis; and (2) conflict is fundamental to the human psyche. The observable manifestations – both verbal and behavioural – are simply the (apparently unified but unstable) expression of deep-seated antagonistic principles (of pleasure and reality, of life and death, of convention and transgression, etc.).

The concept of Krisis is to allow the interviewees to publicly re-enact their internal conflicts and their provisional modes of resolution; to access individual disputes beneath the mask of the collective agreement; and to identify the deep-seated mechanisms of involvement and distancing at work beneath the minor compromises with brands.

Krisis is based on a dynamic model, thus attenuates the risks of a projective model that is becoming increasingly mechanical and reductionist.

### A New Spatial Organisation

The conditions that produce conversation during the information-gathering phase make the aforementioned clear.

The way in which a social group is structured can be interpreted through the group's spatial organisation. The arrangement that the participants are obliged to adhere to, a "U" in the case of projection groups and a circle in the case of Krisis sessions, is therefore a metaphorical representation of the proposed society and its internal dynamic.

Here, the "U" represents convergence and peace making. It is a sort of semicircle in which compromises are negotiated and a consensus reached.

Located at the opening of the "U," the moderator is the focal point for speech and tensions alike. He or she is a tacit reminder for the group to stick together, even though the strongest of its inclinations is division.

The circle, on the other hand, represents opposition and confrontation. It is reminiscent of the arena in which everyone is simultaneously on display and in confrontation with everyone else. The moderator's role is to induce conflict.

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# Giving Recruitment (New) Value

By Gérard Donadieu

The development of a new protocol represented an opportunity to take a fresh look at the recruitment of the actors, recruitment staff, and consumers.



## Recruitment Becomes a Preliminary Interview

For many years, the recruitment phase has been constantly overlooked, and thus a source of great hypocrisy, with clients imagining that the participating consumers are constantly renewed and that the recruitment staff are trying (with varying degrees of fervour) to avoid excessive professionalism among participants.

Everyone's interest is focused on the recruitment questionnaire, which is often very long and almost always unexploited, except for the selection of individuals on the basis of simple criteria such as the consumption of a particular brand or product, or within a given age group.

The thought we devoted to the question of recruitment during the development of the Krisis protocol led us to greatly enhance the value derived from recruitment by converting this phase into a preliminary interview before the group session.

The content of the recruitment interviews is contained in the Krisis report. It makes it possible to identify an individual's relationship to an offering, the initial motivations or resistance to a brand, a universe, or an idea, the first images, and personal values. The material derived from this interview may also help flesh out or explain certain positions taken by individuals within the group context.

## A Key Step in the Formation of the Subgroups

This more profound recruitment interview also makes it possible to check the personality characteristics that are required for

proper group functioning. Participants should not be shy, hesitant, or easily influenced; they should be spontaneous, imaginative, and able to express their point of view with clarity.

Among the fundamental considerations that gave birth to Krisis, this recruitment procedure is crucial for the formation of the subgroups. In effect, a Krisis group consists of three subgroups, each of which represents a specific marketing profile or specific opinion. These subgroups are determined in co-operation with the client and based on strategic criteria.

This triadic approach constitutes a break: the structures of more traditional groups are almost always homogeneous.

To illustrate this approach, take the example of the mass consumer market, which may be divided into core targets, rejecters, and prospects. Another example, which relates to cosmetic surgery: people who do it, people who refuse it, people who hesitate.

## Controlled Selection

This subgroup-based approach is supported by the fact that the Krisis protocol creates situations in which the representatives of the three perspectives on the client's issue can express themselves and directly confront one another.

This confrontation makes it possible to reveal the decision-making process and the sources of tension that underlie their

choice. By confronting the refuters with the enthusiasm of those who are convinced, it reveals both reinforcements for loyalty and new temptations to act.

This destabilising confrontation reveals the conditions under which refuters can be changed into undecideds (from negative to neutral) or undecideds can be transformed into active purchasers (from neutral to positive). This polarisation of tendencies and the way they are monitored throughout the group session has an extremely positive effect on the quality of the results obtained from the group session and their descriptive, explanatory, and prospective value.

Finally, the fact that an individual has already taken part in a group session before being asked to participate in a Krisis group is not a problem, because the Krisis group session does not allow participants to establish parallels between what is required of them during the Krisis session and what they have done during earlier experiments.

Nevertheless, the methods used mean that the same person cannot take part more than once in a Krisis-type group. This is possible and manageable because Krisis has been exclusively developed by Ipsos and we control the entire selection process. This means that it is easy for us to identify individuals who want to participate for a second time.



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## Moderating Krisis. A New Attitude: Moderator, Agitator, Agent Provocateur

By Barbara Le Roy Liberge and Solange Nuizière

To moderate a Krisis group means adopting a totally new and particular approach. First, there are two moderators of equal status, who work well together, listen intently to what goes on, complement one another, and are able to swap roles.



### Half-Way Between an Individual Interview and a Group Dynamic

As moderators, we are not confronted with a group but are instead part of the group. Our authority is therefore less evident than in situations where the full group addresses us. This means that the moderator's function is more discrete. The moderator incites dialogue between participants and encourages discussion, while also respecting the objectives that are to be achieved and treating all the subjects to be discussed with the appropriate mixture of intervention and retirement, support and incitement, receptiveness and partisanship.

Seen from the outside, this seems simple, simpler than the moderation of projective groups. Once the discussion has been started, the moderator should do no more than disappear....

Seen from the inside, it turns out that it is important to listen closely in order to identify the areas of conflict and amplify them, to detect the contradictions in real time and use them to provoke the participants, and to prevent the discussion from resulting in a consensus.

### To Authorize a Conflict, It Has to be Staged and the Conditions Have to be Imposed

While conducting a projective research group, the moderator constantly addresses the group as a whole, without speaking to any individual in particular. The moderator gains attention by repeating what has already been said. In Krisis, we are restoring the principle of non-directivity: active listening and following the logic of the participants, but without respecting the non-intervention rule.

This attitude, which merges the position of the interviewer during a face-to-face interview with that of a moderator initiating a group dynamic, is crucial: it is an approach that makes it possible to understand each profile, as both an individual within the collective, in order to identify interactions and influences.

There is also the booth, a room close by, in which each of the two moderators can speak separately with a participant, at either the participant's or the moderator's request. Here, the hot-blooded can calm down, the timid can start to talk, and the shy can show what goes on behind the mask. The participant then re-enters the group, better prepared to debate and state their positions. While this happens, the other moderator advances the session.

To be able to encourage discussion and authorise conflict, it is necessary to stage the session and impose the necessary conditions. The first step is to arrange the chairs in the form of a circle, although the moderators have no specified places. Then, present the study in a way that explains its objectives, stating the rules that focus on the value of expressing different opinions and the need for the various individuals to adopt, at the very least, a defensive attitude – but preferably an aggressive attitude. Also, remind participants of the fact that they were chosen because of the diversity and robustness of their opinions.

### Catalysts to Ignite Debates

Reverse presentations, in which participants introduce their neighbour based on his or her appearance, represent another way of stimulating the 'crisis' because everyone

involved feels both simultaneously hidden and unveiled.

In addition, to extend the discussion and unveil arguments that might otherwise remain undisclosed, as moderators we have a number of catalysts at our disposal: role-playing controversies and conflicts through a trial, a "war," or a divorce; playing with the product or brand on stage; mimicking the opponent; taking a physical position; allowing freedom of movement or attitude....

Even when there is a break, the moderators remain watchful: the participants are not allowed to say whom they really are or attempt reconciliation.

However, at the end of the session, everyone is asked to re-establish their own identity in order to disarm these explosive charges. And when the participants have left, happy at having been able to express themselves with such freedom, and when the clients/observers have listened to them, happy and interested at hearing something new, there are still two moderators there to continue the discussion!



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## Faster, Further, Simpler: Forwards!

By François Backman

Analysing and presenting a Krisis study means first forgetting. Forget the peripherals and paraphernalia and go straight to what is important. Forget esoteric terms and analyses in favour of simplicity. Forget the dismal slides overloaded with illegible terms, randomly designed to give the client a finished product and a dynamic, expressive mode of presentation.



In a sense, this is going back to the heart of our profession. It is also to attempt to better understand the problems encountered by our clients.

### An Analysis Backed Up by Resources

Because Krisis places the focus on conflict, the analysis does not have to adopt the conventional circumlocutions and detours. The fractures are apparent and individual positions vigorous and clearly identifiable.

The possible points of convergence between opposing opinions that may emerge during the confrontation no longer form the traditional flabby consensus due to context. Instead, they form the foundation for actions that can either support or invalidate them.

The analysis makes it possible to understand how the core topic of the debate is organised, grasp the mechanisms underlying confrontation, identify the primary features, and the points of disagreement. It gains in relevance by contributing to our understanding in operational terms without debarring an analytical approach. Benefiting from an enhanced impact, escaping the risk of insipid dissipation, and with increased relevance, the analysis draws its value from its simplicity and its enhanced rigour.

The Krisis analysis provides a response and takes a position. It is not limited to a description of the progress of the session. Instead, it takes sides. Krisis is not just an innovative method, it is not just a tool; it is a pre-session appraisal undertaken in cooperation with our clients in order to give them a post-session understanding.

### Strengthened Cooperation with our Clients

The submitted report is short, simple, and clear. It makes genuine recommendations and is characterised by a veritable commitment to concision and precision. It is a surgical strike, not carpet-bombing. The presentation is made dynamic with the use of video. Depending on the type of presentation the client opts for, he or she may receive different film formats that can then be reused internally for training company teams or for various events. Through its use of conflict, Krisis breathes

life into the group, and this continues throughout the presentation phase.

The development of a Krisis report and presentation represents strengthened cooperation with our clients: ahead of the session itself, in the definition of the problems that are to be resolved, during the conduct of the group session, and during the presentation. Krisis is not intended as a simple market research service that concludes with the submission of a report; it is an intelligent partnership.

Faster, going straight to the heart of the issue without any unnecessary frills; more profound, dissecting the problem while ignoring subsidiary themes; and simpler, yielding explicit results that can be immediately exploited: the analysis must help boost relevance and strengthen the relationship between Ipsos and its clients.

Krisis, or the welcome breath of fresh air....



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## What our clients think

### Krisis: The Return of The Reptilian Brain

By Anne Dellière,  
Richemont Group

Over the last ten years, the luxury sector has been turned upside-down.

#### Everyone's Talking Luxury

New brands have been introduced and enjoyed success despite their lack of history and expertise, which were once the golden rules. Gucci is successfully selling watches. Dior offers jewellery. Fashion and luxury are becoming entwined.

The marks of luxury are everywhere: in a coffee, caviar body lotion, an airplane seat, cat food, a spa.

Everyone talks about it. Not a week goes by without a newspaper or TV program revealing the recipe for success, divulging the levers of luxury marketing, analysing product offers, or decoding the latest trends.

And where are the consumers in all this? Sometimes lost, often over-informed, and increasingly playful. They mix up an H&M top with a Chanel skirt, a Cartier watch, and an Agatha ring. They mix and match. Their recipe for luxury is becoming more personal, their consumption more individual....

#### Luxury Unmasked

How can we take the pulse of a market as unstable as this? The luxury sector, a sector

that sells emotion, makes great use of group sessions and qualitative methods. However, this world has changed, the consumers have changed. Consequently, the methods must change too.

A classic group session organised for the luxury sector often offers up a number of well-worn ideas, extracts from analyses read in the papers, and certain long-standing archetypes.

We are thus often faced with a lost heir who falls back on outmoded, formal discourse, a moral vision of luxury; or an informed newcomer to the luxury market who offers a rehash of analyses read in *Elle* or *Vogue*; and a player, who plays not only with luxury and its codes, but also with the group discussion method, which he or she both masters and manipulates.

It was essential to find a method which, on the one hand, would shake up the rules of the game in order to strip off the masks worn by customers in the luxury sector and, on the other hand, would help individuals differentiate and express themselves within the group.

Krisis makes this possible.

Through the segmented composition of the group, through the moderators' role as catalysts and destabilisers, through the



opportunity for participants to express themselves both individually and within the group (thanks to the use of the separate "confessional" booth), Krisis is able to reveal true, unadorned expressions faster. It leaves behind the politically correct debate about luxury in which everyone has his or her particular role.

We no longer call on the cerebral areas of the brain to yield a comfortable discussion that simply goes round in circles. We call on the brain's reptilian components. Obligated to defend their positions, individuals express their deep-seated desires. It was essential to make this transition if we are to understand what is happening in the luxury market today.

**Anne Dellière** is the Director of Strategic Planning for the Richemont Group, one of the world's leading luxury goods groups (Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, Montblanc, etc.). Formerly, she worked for 15 years for various research institutes (including TMO and Ipsos). With a diploma from ESSEC, she runs courses at CELSA (Paris). Contact: [anne.delliere@richemont.com](mailto:anne.delliere@richemont.com).



### Krisis: Revelation Born of Crisis

By Christian Veysseyre,  
Danone Group

Media messages concerning the benefits and fears relating to certain food products have become not only abundant, but also sometimes contradictory. Not a week goes by without the opinions of journalists, organisations, or scientists either putting us on guard or vaunting the merits of some foodstuff. Ultimately, this results in consumers adopting controversial viewpoints.

The Krisis method helps us understand more clearly. Krisis makes it possible to amplify certain commonly proposed ideas or rumours concerning food products, and it helps us identify the extent to which consumers' arguments are robust and well founded. The way in which participants are able to respond and contradict one another when subjected to extreme or fear-inducing scenarios makes it possible to differentiate and choose between superficial speech and deeper convictions.

Krisis brings a dynamic that is genuinely different from more conformist qualitative group techniques. All the participants are asked to be genuine actors both in the projective exercises and in the many roles they play. The stimulating, watchful moderators do not hesitate to push the participants back to entrenched positions in order to reveal their strong resistance.

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