

están referenciados en la FNAC, y un libro no disponible puede encargarse sin aumento de precio. Al igual que en el caso de la música, los *forums* de la FNAC son una plataforma donde los escritores pueden tanto dar a conocer sus nuevos libros como debatir entre ellos y entrar en contacto con su público: en el *forum* de Barcelona se han presentado obras de jóvenes autores como Francisco Casavella o Flavia Company, además de otros libros fruto de autores muy consolidados como Ferran Torrent, Vicente Verdú o Carlos Castilla del Pino.

Las diferencias de la FNAC se basan en su capacidad de servir de plataforma a los nuevos actores culturales, a las nuevas tecnologías y a las nuevas ideas, y en adaptar sin cesar sus servicios a las necesidades de los consumidores. Si hubiera que definir la clave del éxito de la FNAC podríamos hacerlo de la siguiente manera: se trata de una nueva respuesta comercial a un público con exigencias cualitativamente nuevas, que, a diferencia de lo que ocurre en otros ámbitos, hace de la compra de bienes culturales un acto consciente y placentero.

A new offer for a new market

After having taken part in some of the main battles for consumer defence in France and having made that improvements obtained form part of commercial usage, the FNAC intends that intelligence preside the simple and repetitive act of shopping, whose cultural and social echoes become increasingly complex. This brings about the need for involvement in all stages that lead to buying and derive from it. An obligation of involvement that can be characterised by innovation, prescription, and mediation.

In regard to innovation, this can be declined in many different ways. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is related to all the novelties this end-of-millennium technology is surprising us with almost every day. Internet, CD-Rom, and so on, are products the FNAC wished to divulge from the beginning. Now, for example, is the moment of DVD and we can perfectly legitimately ask «What does DVD give us that is new?» The FNAC is leader in the field of broadcasting new technology and informs the public by means of publications and presentations in commercial centres. As soon as they reach the market, these products are tested and selected by our laboratory and, for this reason, no products with mediocre features are to be found.

But innovation also has many other aspects which are not as apparent as technological novelties. The FNAC also intends to be up-to-date in innovation in the field of artistic creation, especially music and literature, and it is here that prescription appears, the capacity to recommend specific products and proposals and be believable. This believableness is based on a key point: absolute independence from suppliers. Independence has several signs: sales personnel at the FNAC are forbidden to exert pressure of any kind on customers to obtain a sale; they only attend a customer if they are asked for attention or advice; the total absence of supplier LSP's in the FNAC premises; the non-existence of loudspeaker publicity messages to stimulate consumption. These are all signs of independence. Thus, there is the possibility of prescription, of setting style, because we act like a truly independent business, which is proved by the loudspeakers and even

the relationship of salespeople with customers. To sum up: what is most profitable in the long term is respecting the consumers' independence. Cultural products are not just any merchandise, and at the FNAC customers have the opportunity to handle them (thumb the books, listen to the music, try the technical apparatus, and so on) with complete freedom and with no one to scold them. This is what we understand as commercial mediation.

A distinctive aspect of the FNAC as opposed to the competition is its extremely extensive cultural programming. The FNAC forum turns into an art gallery, a music hall, a conference and chat hall, a book presentation forum, a cinema, etc., every day. In fact, cultural programming is the most intense activity carried out by the communication and marketing department, an activity which means more than 400 cultural acts a year in each establishment. This strategy distinguishes us from the competition and attracts to our premises a great amount of people interested in the world of art and culture, that is to say, our potential customers are those who really value the FNAC's efforts to offer a different cultural activity every day. This gives added value to the simple art of buying and, in a way, makes our customer not just a buyer, but also a spectator and actor who takes part in our cultural acts. The forum acts in themselves become elements of news interest picked up by all communication media. Thus, public relations and media relations work carried out by the FNAC is a task of vital importance for the communication department.

In this strategy sketched out here, publicity is conceived of almost always as a support to priority public relations actions in the company's communication policy, as, for example, specific actions we carry out with NGO's like Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and *Medicus Mundi*, with campaigns such as «Score a Goal for Peace», or «Donate Books».

Corporate identity is shown both in our publicity communications and shop windows, leaflets, posters, etc., and reflects an aesthetics we believe agrees with our public objective, an aesthetics which tries to reach the mentality and manner of a young audience which makes up the majority of our customers, with an avant-garde, open taste. We use a happy, relaxed expression, a visual language from the world of the comic, a way of «being FNAC».

Besides all this, the FNAC also has the more conventional ways of customer loyalty, such as, for exam-

ple, the FNAC card. One of its main attractions which distinguishes it from other cards is that the owners receive the FNAC agenda with the forum's cultural programmes, besides the more usual advantages like credit access, free parking, and the convenience of plastic payment with delayed payment at the customers' will.

In the field of records, the extreme market and communication media concentration on an ever-increasingly limited number of titles endangers renewal, creation and diversity of music. FNAC's responsibility as one of the main record sales points commits the FNAC to offer a launching pad for new talent, to favour publication by record companies, to give a specific place in the sales line-ups, and allow them to find an audience within the shop's forums, which are encounter and listening points quite alien from commercial activity. The forums not only allow musicians meeting with the public, but also are a promotion platform not to be sneered at, both for musicians themselves and for record companies. Some data help to affirm this statement. In Barcelona, for example, in four months we have programmed at the forum several concerts which cover the whole range of music, from well-known artists such as *Revólver* or *Texas* to young promises like *Jarabe de Palo* or *Konic Theatre*. We must not forget all other genres, including classical music, jazz, or new age. At the same time, the FNAC has opened its doors to DIBA, a platform of independent record companies from Barcelona which chose our forum as the most adequate space for making itself known to the press.

In the case of literature, there is also a marked concentration, although less than in the record market. The selection of novelties proposed by our booksellers cannot be conceived other than by the widest possible selection of books. More than three thousand publishers, from the great multinational groups to the small, local independents are on reference at the FNAC, and a book that is not available can be ordered at no extra cost. In the same way as in the case of music, the FNAC forums are a platform where writers can both make their new books known and debate among themselves and make contact with their audience. In the same way as in the case of music, the Barcelona forum has presented works by young authors such as *Francisco Casavella* or *Flavia Company*, besides other books by very well-established authors like *Ferran Torrent*, *Vicente Verdú*, or *Carlos Castilla del Pino*.

The FNAC's differences are based on its capacity for serving as a platform for new cultural actors, new