



# Short-lived Retail Franchises

by Dale Dobson

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## Family Christian Fetish Shoppe

When demographic surveys indicated that religious affiliation and sexual deviance were both on the rise in major metropolitan areas, this adult-oriented chain attempted to capitalize on both growth markets simultaneously. The inaugural stores enjoyed some success with self-flagellants, but expensive product-development efforts ("Bishopric" and "Oh, Mary!" figural vibrators, "Wedgie the Camel Tales" animated videos, "Pope-on-a-Rope" bondage gear) offended more potential customers than they enticed.

## Build'N'Stein

This monster-themed offshoot of the Build-A-Bear franchise promised amateur mad scientists the opportunity to create living corpses from assorted cadaver parts but delivered only charred, malodorous flesh, accidental electrocutions, and protests from villagers armed with torches and pitchforks. The concept is currently being reworked as Clone Around, a do-it-yourself bioengineering/cloning operation.

## Big Piles of Crap

This gift shop chain was perhaps a little too honest in its choice of name, and the irony was lost on its unfortunate investors. While brisk initial sales of inspirational figurines, wind-up adult novelties, and offensive T-shirts kept the chain afloat for a year, it eventually succumbed to accumulated inventories of banal junk that couldn't be sold at any price.

## Modern Racist

Complete ignorance of the changing face of American culture led Ku Klux Klan entrepreneurs to launch this mall franchise and recruiting center promoting prejudice, hate, and ignorance. No stores were ever opened, and a highly-touted sponsorship agreement fell through when NASCAR officials realized that "racist" did not mean "one who races." The resulting financial debacle set the Klan's "kause" back an additional two hundred years.

## The Jack Shack

An attempt to bring the back-alley handjob into mainstream service retailing, with clean, comfortable facilities, friendly, efficient, drug/HIV-free staff, and local legalization under modified massage therapy regulations. The concept failed to attract a broader market and took all the fun out of it for the existing audience.

## Ice Ice Baby!

A franchise marketing European-style frozen confections in a variety of flavors, it might have been successful had its image not been dependent on the licensed likeness of rapper Vanilla Ice. When the rapper's invented biography was discredited, his feature film failed, and his CDs began gathering dust in warehouses, the chain collapsed. The few surviving stores enjoyed a brief uptick in sales when they turned their focus to Plain and Peanut Eminems, but were

finally shuttered for good when ventures into Milli Vanilli Ice Cream and Menudo Pot Pies attracted derisive laughter, but no sales.

## Hey, Mom! Watch This!

This attempt to provide convenient daycare and genuinely exciting activities for kids failed on both counts, as children ran with scissors, played with fire, and established violent, primitive tribal societies while parents shopped in blissful ignorance. Most malls forced the franchise out when severed heads began accumulating in the Lost and Found.

## Medieval Marketplace

This spin-off from the popular Medieval Times theme restaurant chain attempted to bring the same sense of period flavor to the retail experience. Limited product offerings (how many flagons and map cases does one person need?), pricing issues (books produced using medieval technology retailed for upwards of \$2500), and problems with internal communication systems (important corporate data was carried by couriers on foot or horseback) seriously hampered expansion. Poor staff hygiene (many bathed twice annually in an attempt to maintain authenticity) contributed to a steady decline in sales, and all stores were finally closed by order of the Centers for Disease Control following a bizarre and unexpected revival of the Black Plague.