

# A store uses space baby adoption to pull shoppers away from Internet

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 12.14.18

Word Count **753**

Level **780L**



Image 1. Four-year-old Sydney Stephens of San Diego, California, holds "Susiking," one of the babies from the planet "Neonatopia," at the Distroller World store in the city's Fashion Valley Mall. Photo by: Howard Lipin/San Diego Union Tribune/Zuma Press/TNS

Claire Talerico made a video of her daughter Mia finalizing baby adoption paperwork with a nurse. Two things stood out, though.

For one thing, Mia is just 10 years old. For another, Mia's baby resembled a pink ball with a tiny body attached.

This wasn't a real adoption, nor was it a real baby. Mia "adopted" her baby at a Mexican toy store called Distroller World.

"There are no other toys like them," Mia said of the 12 Distroller babies she has adopted. "At home, we made them a nursery, then I built a little school for them. We even make up voices for them."

## Customers Do More Than Just Shop

Distroller World is an example of experience-based retail. In experience-based retail, stores try to give shoppers an experience. Shoppers do something at the store. They do not just buy something. Many stores have lost business to shopping on the Internet. Experience-based retail is a way for stores to win customers back.



At Distroller stores, parents and children are swept up in the story of a planet called Neonatopia. In Neonatopia, there are 22 different types of babies who need adopting.

Children sign the adoption paperwork with an employee dressed as a nurse. Their babies arrive in a "spaceship" that travels around the store.

"We create experiences," said Daryn Fillis, who is the head of Distroller North America. Distroller wants to give kids the experience of adoption.

"You can't call these dolls. They're babies. They aren't for sale," Fillis said. "You adopt them, so there's an adoption fee. The language that we use helps tell that story."

Stores such as Target and Walmart are also getting into the experience retail game. They have opened bigger toy departments with play areas and special events.

Distroller has more than 70 stores, mainly in Mexico and Latin America. Build-A-Bear Workshop and the American Girl are other examples of experience retail.



"You get to create something and then you get to take it home," said Jim Silver. He is in charge of the toy review website TTPM. That is only possible to do in an actual store, he said.

### **Inspiring Children To Care**

The first Distroller World opened in Mexico City, Mexico in 2004. It is the brainchild of artist and businesswoman Amparo Serrano.

Serrano wanted to give her nieces something that would inspire them to be more caring, Fillis said.

Distroller's U.S. stores offer three types of babies, called nerlies, zygoties and espongies. They cost between \$19.99 to \$36.99. The new mothers and fathers can also buy accessories for their babies, such as vitamins, food, clothes and incubators.

There is a limited number of new babies. New ones are introduced a few times a year.

The company's first U.S. stores opened last year in San Diego, California and Houston, Texas. A store in Glendale, California will open this month.

Each store contains an adoption center and a medical clinic. "Children invent all sorts of things that are happening with their babies when they come back in for check-ups," Fillis said.

### **Small Children Are The Primary Targets**

In Mexico and South America, smaller children are mostly interested in the store. They are from about 6 to 8 years old.

However, the toys have begun attracting older children in the U.S. One of them is Internet star Mia Talerico, who is 10 years old. Videos on her YouTube page, Miatalerico101, have gotten as many as 91,500 views.

Mia lives in Santa Barbara, California. It took her and her mother four hours to drive to the store in San Diego and then four hours back.

"She still talks about it all of the time," said Mia's mother, Claire Talerico. "It was absolutely worth the effort."

For Loreanne Switzer and her daughter, Fiona, the drive took 16 hours round-trip. Fiona is 5 years old.

Switzer said she was amazed by how Distroller's babies kept her daughter's attention.

"Every time they come out, she's really excited to see what the new babies will be and which ones she might want to adopt."

## Quiz

1 Which two choices are main ideas of the article?

1. *Distroller babies have become extremely popular with children.*
2. *Distroller World has a spaceship that travels around the store.*
3. *Distroller has more than 70 stores in Mexico, Latin America and the United States.*
4. *Distroller World uses experience retail to attract more customers.*

- (A) 1 and 3
- (B) 1 and 4
- (C) 2 and 3
- (D) 2 and 4

2 Read the paragraph from the section "Inspiring Children To Care."

*Serrano wanted to give her nieces something that would inspire them to be more caring, Fillis said.*

HOW does this paragraph support the main idea of the article?

- (A) It shows what the head of Distroller North America thinks about the company.
- (B) It illustrates that Distroller babies are more popular in the United States than in Mexico.
- (C) It explains the reason why Distroller babies were created in the first place.
- (D) It shows a problem that the Distroller World creator faced after making the company.

- 3 What effect did Distroller babies have on kids in the United States?
- (A) Many younger kids love collecting Distroller babies and have lost interest in Build-A-Bear Workshop and American Girl.
  - (B) Many boys and girls in the United States are going online to order Distroller babies and have them shipped to their homes.
  - (C) Many kids are starting YouTube pages that are specially designed to show off the Distroller babies they own.
  - (D) Many older kids in the United States are interested in Distroller babies and some are willing to travel hours to get them.
- 4 What caused some retail stores to get involved with experience retail?
- (A) They wanted to be able to compete with Internet shopping.
  - (B) They wanted to teach kids about the real process of adoption.
  - (C) They wanted to become as popular as Target and Walmart.
  - (D) They wanted to get more kids to buy things online.

## Answer Key

1 Which two choices are main ideas of the article?

1. *Distroller babies have become extremely popular with children.*
2. *Distroller World has a spaceship that travels around the store.*
3. *Distroller has more than 70 stores in Mexico, Latin America and the United States.*
4. *Distroller World uses experience retail to attract more customers.*

- (A) 1 and 3
- (B) 1 and 4
- (C) 2 and 3
- (D) 2 and 4**

2 Read the paragraph from the section "Inspiring Children To Care."

*Serrano wanted to give her nieces something that would inspire them to be more caring, Fillis said.*

HOW does this paragraph support the main idea of the article?

- (A) It shows what the head of Distroller North America thinks about the company.
- (B) It illustrates that Distroller babies are more popular in the United States than in Mexico.
- (C) It explains the reason why Distroller babies were created in the first place.**
- (D) It shows a problem that the Distroller World creator faced after making the company.

- 3 What effect did Distroller babies have on kids in the United States?
- (A) Many younger kids love collecting Distroller babies and have lost interest in Build-A-Bear Workshop and American Girl.
  - (B) Many boys and girls in the United States are going online to order Distroller babies and have them shipped to their homes.
  - (C) Many kids are starting YouTube pages that are specially designed to show off the Distroller babies they own.
  - (D) **Many older kids in the United States are interested in Distroller babies and some are willing to travel hours to get them.**
- 4 What caused some retail stores to get involved with experience retail?
- (A) **They wanted to be able to compete with Internet shopping.**
  - (B) They wanted to teach kids about the real process of adoption.
  - (C) They wanted to become as popular as Target and Walmart.
  - (D) They wanted to get more kids to buy things online.