

Movies “a la Cart”

✘ I read an article about supermarkets now offering “video-equipped shopping carts.” There’s a screen advertising store products for the parents and a second screen inside the child’s “car” playing videos like “Mickey Mouse Clubhouse” and “Handy Manny.” My initial reaction was, “do children really need to be exposed to more tv?” But I never had children so what do I know. I decided to ask a few thirty-somethings who actually have children what they thought about this idea.

The first response was from John, who does the family grocery shopping and has taken his almost 3-year old son with him since he was born. He tells me his son is very well behaved and he doesn’t experience the “nagging effect” some parents do. John was excited about these carts because (1) his son is getting older and doesn’t always want to sit in the cart and letting him walk down the aisles isn’t such a good idea and (2) his little guy’s favorite shows are “MMC” and “Handy Manny.”

The women I asked had a different perspective.

Christine, mother of three, ages 11, 9 and 5, had lots to say. “Kids in this country watch way too much tv, they can watch it at home and, in some houses, in every room including the kitchen and bathroom; they watch it in the car, and they even watch it in school. I hate movie days in school, but that’s another topic. In any case, most children in this country do not need even an extra half an hour.”

“It might keep kids happier and cut down on some spending, but having your child’s attention and talking about the different foods and teaching them why we’re not buying the gummies (they’re the worst enemies of small children’s teeth) is probably more important.”

“Every kid has temper tantrums and they learn from them. I

know so many people who refuse to take their kids to the grocery store, out to dinner, or to the mall. But the fact of the matter is that's how they learn to behave in society."

Audra, the mother of a one-year old, said, "It's good if you're just exhausted and the child is too – and you need to get your business handled at the store without interruptions from the child. But it shouldn't be used as a tool every time. You're avoiding the traps of advertising when it comes to kids reaching for items in the store (distracting them), but if there are ads on the video, it's the same thing. Also, the kids might get used to watching the video when they go to the store and it sounds like there are only going to be a few of these available at each location. So, what happens when the kid goes without it? My husband and I think it's just a matter of disciplining your child so they know what should and should not be done/tolerated at the store... Seems to me that as a parent, I'd want to view the video first—but clearly the video can only be watched by the child so you hope the makers of it take that into consideration...and you're not exposing your child to something worse than you normally would... If the videos were clean, with no ads, I might use them as a reward more so than a distraction...and use it sparingly."

Mother of an almost 7- and 4-year old, Carolyn, said this: "Here's the thing...it's just one more place where a TV is being placed. Can't you talk to your kids throughout the store? Get them to pick out a new colored vegetable. Ask them to count 4 pears and put them in a bag. Find me the least expensive bottle of ketchup. Why do we want our kids to zone out? Yes, they need that sometimes, but, between the car's tv and the grocery carts, we're forgetting the relationship with our kids... Of course, these are the only carts now available at my store. The old truck/car carts are no longer there. So, what other option do I have? They don't hold a lot and you can't take them outside. So, once you're finished with your shopping, you have to bribe your kids to get out before

the show is over ... The checkers don't like them either; they're difficult to maneuver. Overall, I hated the old ones but dislike these even more."

Overall, it sounds like a bad idea. I've always thought that tvs have been used as a babysitter for too many children and has removed any real potential for children to use their imaginations. These carts sound like just another means to ignore and avoid interacting with your children.

After reading from those far more knowledgeable about these things, I'd have to say, I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.