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“A Really Awful Product”

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Rival Electric Can Openers: Nostalgia and Price

Executive Summary

One of the many kitchen appliances in the Rival Company’s lineup is a series of low-priced, high-design can openers. The Company’s long history, and brand name appeals to Senior consumers, who seek the product out due to brand loyalty. Baby Boomers seek out Rival for nostalgic reasons. Rival also competes on both price, and unique distribution outlets. The unique distribution appeals to impulse buyers, and the low price points appeal to consumers who want to save the most money on a can opener.

The Rival Electric Can Opener: The Nostalgic Side

Rival, a division of The Holmes Group, is a historic leader in electric kitchen appliances. Founded in 1932, its “o-Mat” and “o-Matic” kitchen appliances are products of America’s post-war boom. In 1945, Rival introduced the Can-o-Mat—the first electric can opener, and the Company has continued to make can openers since. Because of the Company’s history, Rival’s can openers inspire nostalgic feelings for the post-war era (Rival, [history.html](#)). The Holmes Group chose not to change Rival’s name when it acquired Rival in 1999 (The Holmes Group)—possibly because of the name’s history and pop-culture prominence. Rival enjoys an established relationship with Seniors and Baby Boomers who remember Rival’s innovative kitchen appliances from the 1950s.

Seniors are brand-loyal consumers, and have used Rival's products for more than 50 years. Seniors are familiar with the Company and have similar expectations for each successive can opener they purchase. For some, the only comparison required is within the Rival can opener product line. Rival continues to appeal to its original customers with standard can openers, but also innovating in areas of ergonomic design, and ease of use (Rival, product_opener.aspx).

While Seniors are continuing a relationship with Rival, Baby Boomers buy Rival can openers to satiate feelings of nostalgia. Like any age group, the Boomers perceive childhood as a halcyon time of simplicity and innocence. One important trend with the Boomer generation is a desire to return to this age—which is apparent in the recent move towards “retro” in kitchen design. While Boomers do not exhibit the same brand-loyalty as Seniors, the Boomer affiliation for returning to themes of childhood helps the appeal of these can openers.

With Prices This Low, How Could You Refuse?

Nostalgia is not the only component driving sales of Rival can openers. Price and availability are also factors in Rival's success. Average prices for can openers range from \$10 to \$60 (Epinions.com, Can_Openers). The Rival website lists all available can openers in the \$10 to \$20 range. In addition to the price, the can opener designs range from the boxy-looking traditional can opener like the CN7600W (Figure 1) to the ergonomic CN1000 (Figure 2) (Rival, init.do).



Figure 1 (init.do)



Figure 2 (init.do)

While consumers may like Rival's contemporary design and low price, Rival also uses unique distribution to appeal to consumers. Rival's can openers are available at typical discount web and brick-and-mortar retailers such as Target, Wal-Mart, and Amazon.com. What sets its distribution apart is availability in grocery store chains, which appeals to one-stop, impulse buyers (Epinions.com, Rival). Impulse buyers only realize they want a can opener when they see it in the store, and they may not want to go to another store to compare prices or product features. By keeping the price low, the product seems a quick and painless purchase.

By keeping prices low, and distributing to online merchants, the Rival can openers also seem to appeal to consumers who are willing to research for the best price online. These consumers know they want a can opener before they see one, and are willing to research design and available features. Rival tries to appeal to this group by offering appealing design, and additional features such as knife sharpeners. Additionally, customers may add a low-priced can opener to an order to meet a website's minimum requirements for free shipping.

Conclusion

Rival can openers appeal to several groups of consumers. Rival a legendary brand name in pop-culture, and works to capitalize on this by appealing to Seniors who remember using Rival products, and Baby Boomers who are looking to bring products they remember from childhood. Rival also appeals to consumers buying a can opener on impulse, by making its openers available at a price that an impulse buyer can justify. Finally, the product has a good online distribution, meaning savvy internet shoppers looking for a good deal will spot Rival's low prices and purchase the can opener online.

Works Cited

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