

Super Cheap Image

Now before I start this story, let me first assure you that this is the report of an actual experience. I am not making it up nor was I on 'hooch' or anything else!

In Europe, Renault is proud of the fact that the name and the brand are so well known that they can advertise less than many of their competitors and still maintain an excellent image and 'brand recognition'. Renault is a household word. Everybody knows that Renault has been building cars for over 100 years and is 'No. 1' in Europe. Everybody knows that Renault has a history of building innovative and trend setting cars. They know that Renault controls Nissan and that the Renault/Nissan Alliance is the fourth largest car maker in the world by production numbers and the second only to Toyota in stock market capitalisation. They know that Renault won the 2005 Formula 1 Manufacturers Championship and continues to lead the competition in 2006 and a lot more besides. In fact, the average European would be insulted if you tried to tell him these things that he virtually learnt in kindergarten!

Well, does this happy state of affairs extend to areas outside Europe? It may do in some countries, but from my recent experience, certainly not in Australia.

The name of the town and the person who is the 'star' of this report has been changed to protect the guilty, but the following is otherwise exactly what happened.....

I was in the country town of Bloggsville where my company has a contract at a local power station. We have purchased a number of items from the local Super Cheap branch but have not taken the trouble to set up an account. I needed to visit the store to pre-pay by credit card for some supplies. As I drove into Bloggsville, I went to the local service station to refuel and found that the fuel cap on my Renault 19 had failed. It would not lock on and was ready to fall off the first time that I went over a bump. After I had finished my other business with Kaylene, the store manager, the conversation went like this: -

Phil: *Would you happen to have a fuel cap to fit a Renault 19?*

Kaylene: *To fit a **what?***

Phil: *A Renault 19.*

Kaylene: *How do you spell it?*

Phil: **R..E..N..A..U..L..T.**

Kaylene: *Who makes it?*

Phil: *Renault.*

Kaylene, now obviously wanting to gently humour me: *No Phil, what I mean is – is it a Toyota or a Holden or a Ford or what?*

Phil: *No Kaylene, Renault is the name of the manufacturer. Renault is Here I told Kaylene a little bit about Renault and when I said the Renault controlled Nissan, I could see her eyes glaze over! Kaylene now knew that I was a real 'nut case'! I then remembered that Renault had won the Formula 1 Grand Prix on the previous Sunday and there had been a report on it in Tuesday's Courier Mail, so I said: *Do you follow motor racing?**

Kaylene: *A bit.*

Phil: *Do you know who won the Grand Prix on Sunday and is leading this year's Formula 1 Manufacturer's Championship?*

Kaylene, with a look of triumph: *That would be the Super Cheap Commodore, wouldn't it?*

At this stage I could see that I was getting nowhere so I asked Kaylene where she kept the fuel caps and went down to look for something suitable. Meanwhile Kaylene was busy looking through catalogues not only for fuel caps, but also for oil filters, spark plugs etc. After about five minutes, Kaylene came down and said: *You might just be right; Renault does appear here in the spark plug catalogue!*

I could tell that Kaylene still didn't really believe that Renault was a separate manufacturer or anything else that I had told her. Deep down she knew that it must be a mis-print in the catalogue. I couldn't find a suitable fuel cap so I said goodbye and went on my way wondering what Renault needs to do to get recognition in this country. And by the way - the "Super Cheap Commodore" continues to lead the Formula 1 Manufacturer's Championship in spite of a few wins by Ferrari!