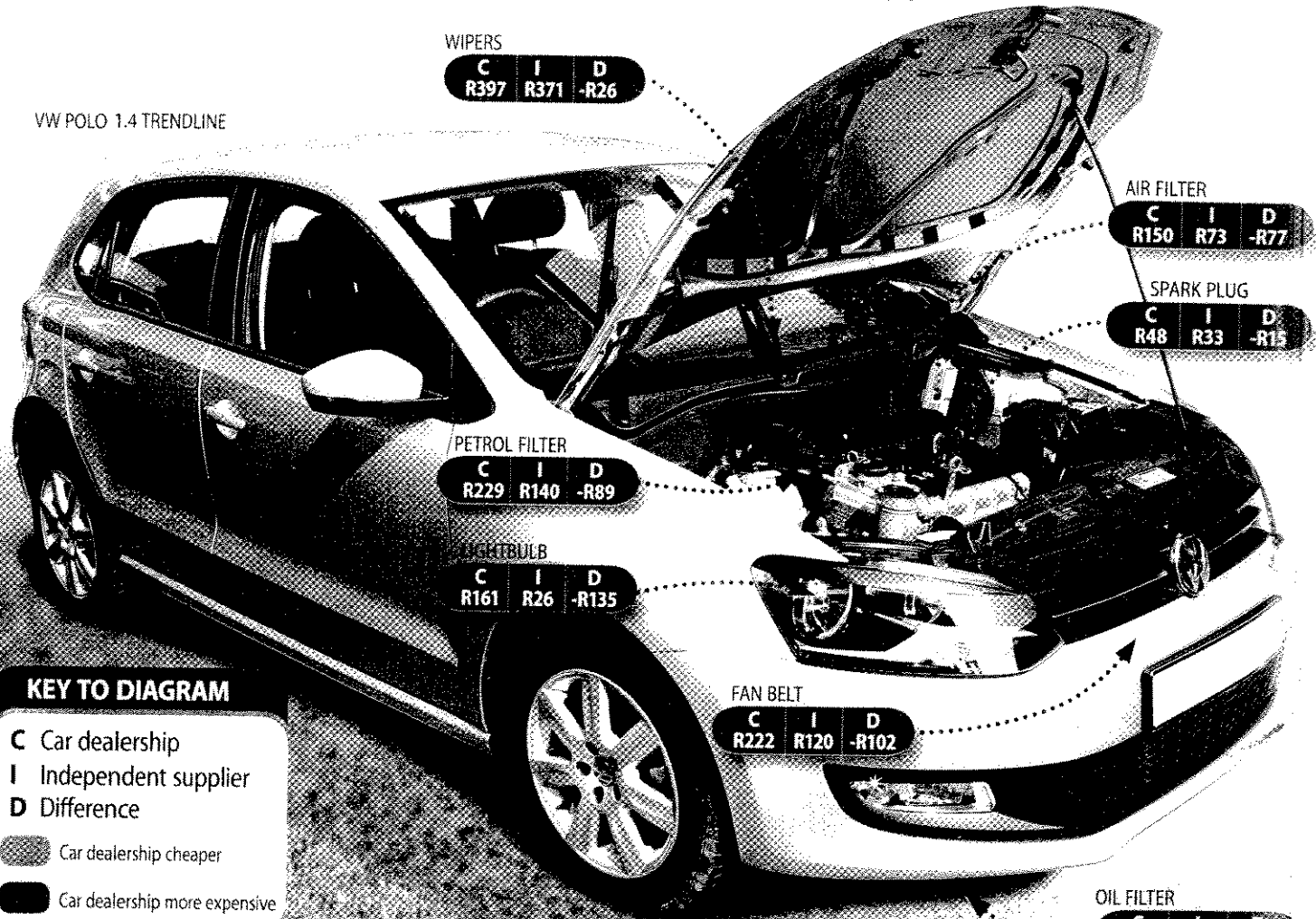


HIGH COST OF CAR PARTS



Factory-fitted and manufacturer-approved spare parts cost a fortune – should you buy from independent suppliers?



VW POLO 1.4 TRENDLINE

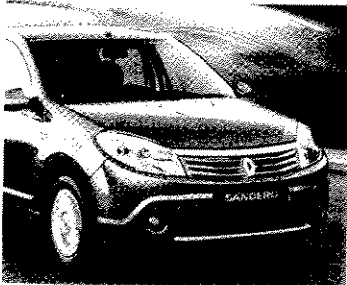
KEY TO DIAGRAM

- C** Car dealership
- I** Independent supplier
- D** Difference

-  Car dealership cheaper
-  Car dealership more expensive

CAR PART PRICES COMPARED

RENAULT SANDERO 1.4 AUTHENTIQUE



	C	I	D
Wipers	R128	R231	-R103
Oil filter	R74	R87	-R13
Petrol filter	R157	R114	-R43
Air filter	R120	R148	-R28
Spark plug	R36	R28	-R8
Lightbulb	R82	R20	-R62
Fan belt	R250	R95	-R155

HYUNDAI I20 1.4



	C	I	D
W	R148	R185	-R37
O	R58	R40	-R18
P	R243	N/A*	---
A	R194	R108	-R86
S	R80	R78	-R2
L	R44	R26	-R18
F	R277	R65	-R212

NO ONE wants to compromise their vehicle's reliability – or their own safety – with dodgy spare parts. But more and more consumers are complaining that they can't afford to maintain their vehicles.

Most of us have had an unpleasant experience somewhere along the line where we've had to fork out for expensive car parts.

Recently when I wanted to have a niggling noise in my car's chassis seen to the Cape Town dealership informed me it would involve replacing wheel-bearing components – and quoted me R6 165 for them.

I called an independent supplier and discovered he could supply the necessary parts from a reputable US wholesale manufacturer for R3 112 – about half the price the car dealership charged.

A colleague told me his car dealer wanted to charge him R85 for a parking light bulb for his new Japanese-make car. He eventually paid R5 for one at an independent supplier in Brackenfell, Cape Town.

Consumer forums also report receiving complaints from vehicle owners who say the cost of some factory-fitted "genuine parts" are exorbitant.

The cost of vehicle repairs is a major headache for insurers as well: the high cost of new car parts results in many vehicles being scrapped instead of being repaired.

But what about owners who simply want to maintain their vehicles?

How do the prices of parts supplied by dealerships and so-called independent suppliers

compare, and to what extent do they differ in their quality?

We did a random check on the cost of some of the most critical service parts. Below are the prices given by car dealerships (C) in Cape Town and two reputable independent suppliers (I). The lowest quotes are given throughout.

Genuine or alternative parts?

Consumers can buy genuine parts, also known as original equipment (OE) parts, or alternative parts ("after-market parts").

What should the ordinary motorist do? And where do so-called pirate parts fit into the picture?

Many parts are inferior to the after-market or alternative parts sold in his store, says independent parts supplier Deon Serfontein, owner of Good Hope Spares in Cape Town. But some of the spares he sells are similar in quality to parts dealerships sell under different brand names and packaging.

For example a manufacturer that produces clutch parts for vehicle plants also provides them to independent suppliers like him, Serfontein says, mentioning two well-known brands.

By sticking to well-known spare parts brands, he says, you are assured of a product that's very close to the quality supplied by the dealership.

Parts replaced during routine services are sometimes identical, whether you buy them from the dealership or an independent supplier.

For instance dealerships use NGK or Bosch spark plugs,

Serfontein says, and filters from GUD.

"There are many other products that definitely aren't made in the same [highly-regarded] parts factories. They're often exceptionally cheap but definitely not of the same quality," he says

"Retail Motor Industry Organisation (RMI) members are trying to create more awareness about pirated parts – inferior-quality unbranded parts. There are also unscrupulous people who mislead consumers by for example distributing a 'Bosh' spark plug with packaging that looks similar to that of the genuine Bosch product."

Where does the cost come in?

Why do car manufacturers and their dealerships charge more for the same or similar parts?

The answer is simple: while independent suppliers are under no obligation to stock a specific part, consumers expect their car dealerships to always cater for their needs.

So car manufacturers have to factor development and inventory costs plus overheads into their prices as manufacturing and keeping parts in stock for 15 years isn't cheap.

Warning from industry watchdog

According to the RMI it's acceptable for consumers to take their vehicles to an independent instead of an OEM (original equipment manufacturer) authorised workshop and to use more affordable service parts. But they warn consumers that if counterfeit parts are used the performance and reliability of

vehicles – and consequently your safety – could be compromised. For example an inferior part could cause the car's engine to seize up.

Vehicles with low running costs

Which vehicles have more affordable parts? Serfontein explains that this depends on volumes: the more units of a specific make of car manufactured, the more affordable the parts usually are.

"That's why the Citi Golf is one of the most economical cars. Polo is also cost-effective, as are Isuzu bakkies and Opel."

According to the 2010 Kinsey report, an analysis by motoring expert Malcolm Kinsey of car dealerships' spares prices, the Renault Sandero 1.4 Authentique, Chevrolet Spark and Hyundai i10 are among the most affordable entry-level models in terms of overall maintenance.

We looked at about 30 parts, including service parts and so-called repair and crash parts. Looking at only service parts the Spark, Chery and Tata Indica were also exceptionally affordable to run.

But, Kinsey says, the cost of spares for entry-level vehicles has increased because models are generally more sophisticated and fitted with more luxuries.

Spares check list

- Buy reputable brands of spares with a reasonable guarantee.
- Avoid so-called bargains.
- Buy from RMI members.
- Check if the product is endorsed by both the manufacturer and distributor. □

TOYOTA YARIS ZEN 1.0



	C	I	D
Wipers	R527	R267	-R260
Oil filter	R118	R42	-R76
Petrol filter	R977	N/A*	---
Air filter	R320	R158	-R162
Spark plug	R41	R37	-R4
Lightbulb	R88	R26	-R62
Fan belt	R683	R172	-R511

BMW 320 i



	C	I	D
W	R560	R208	-R352
O	R109	R103	-R6
P	R2 102**	N/A*	---
A	R259	R126	-R133
S	R200	R150	-R50
L	R130	R26	-R104
F	R540	R104	-R436

* Petrol filter is mostly supplied only by car dealer ** The whole filter system, including petrol pump and pipes, would be replaced only after a long time.