A region is NOT one audience.



01 / THE USEFUL DIFFERENCE

Start with the decision

A regional brief often names a geography and calls it an audience. The label may be useful for distribution, budgets or business responsibility. It does not explain the circumstances in which people encounter the offer. Two people in one city may need different information; two people in different countries may face the same practical obstacle.

The task is not to split a population into ever smaller identities. It is to find differences that change a useful decision in the work: what needs explaining, what evidence matters, where someone can act, or whether the offer is available at all. A difference without a consequence for the campaign may belong in background research rather than become a separate creative segment.

Invented teaching scenario: Borrow Bench rents tools by the day through two fictional branches, A and B. Branch A offers online reservations and counter collection. Branch B currently accepts telephone reservations only. The business wants more first rentals. The example will distinguish operational facts, audience hypotheses and observed behavior. None of its invented customers, locations or findings describes a real regional market. You will produce a small audience map and decide where one shared campaign is sufficient and where the experience genuinely needs to change.

02 / EVIDENCE FIRST

Keep three kinds of statement apart

Begin with a rough evidence ledger. An operational fact can be checked with the business. An observation describes something that happened in a specific setting. A hypothesis proposes an explanation that still needs investigation. Combining these into a smooth persona can make uncertainty disappear on paper without resolving it in the world.

+ Operational fact in the scenario: Branch B cannot accept an online reservation. This changes the call to action regardless of the visitor's age, nationality or language.
+ Invented observation: during three example counter visits, first-time renters asked which drill bit they needed. This suggests a question worth investigating; it does not establish how common it is.
+ Hypothesis: some potential renters may delay because they do not know how to choose the tool. A campaign could address this if further inquiry supports it.
+ Unsupported generalization: people in Market B prefer talking to a person. A telephone-only system does not demonstrate that preference.

For each statement, write where it came from and what would change your view. The point is not to make a small project imitate a large research program. It is to prevent a service limitation from becoming a cultural explanation, or a handful of conversations from becoming a population claim. Use available evidence honestly, then choose an action proportionate to its strength and consequences.

03 / THE AUDIENCE MAP

Use circumstances with consequences

Build a map around the rental decision. In this invented case, three circumstances are useful starting hypotheses. They are not permanent types of people. One person could move between them on different days, and each circumstance could exist at either branch.

Choosing the tool

The person knows the job but not the equipment. Useful information: what the tool can do, what accessories are needed and how to ask for help. Creative implication: show a task and its appropriate equipment. Service implication: make genuine selection support available before inviting people to rely on it.

Checking the total commitment

The person knows the tool but needs the cost, collection time and return conditions. Useful information: the actual rental terms. Creative implication: a clear example of the booking process may matter more than another inspirational image. A claim about affordability cannot substitute for the price.

Acting within the available channel

The person is ready to reserve but must use the branch's supported route. Useful information: an accurate button or telephone instruction. Creative implication: adapt the destination and call to action, not necessarily the whole brand idea.

This map is intentionally short. Add another circumstance only when you can name a different decision it would change. Language access belongs in the map when it affects comprehension or service availability; it should not be used as a shortcut for assumed confidence, wealth or technical ability.

04 / THE CAMPAIGN

One idea, specific paths

Invented worked campaign: the shared headline is 'The job needs a drill. You need it for a day.' The image shows a shelf being fitted, with the rented drill beside the unfinished fixing. Supporting copy explains daily rental and points to the real tool-selection help. The brand proposition stays the same across the two branches.

Branch A execution

Headline: 'The job needs a drill. You need it for a day.' Supporting copy: 'Choose your tool, check the rental terms and reserve online for counter collection.' Button: 'Check tools and availability'. The next page shows supported tools, accessories, collection windows and return conditions. It does not imply home delivery.

Branch B execution

The same headline and image can remain. Supporting copy: 'Call the branch to check the tool, rental terms and collection time.' Action: 'Call to check availability'. Display staffed hours and an alternative inquiry route only if the business genuinely provides one. Do not disguise the telephone step behind a generic 'Book now' button.

The adaptation follows a verified operational difference. It does not need a story about one market being more personal or another more digital. A language version may require different wording and layout while keeping the same action. Check that the branch can support the language promised by the invitation; a translated advertisement alone does not establish an accessible service.

05 / HOW FAR TO SPLIT

Do not confuse specificity with exclusion

A specific scene can help people recognize a useful situation without declaring that only one narrow group should see the campaign. Showing a renter fitting a shelf does not require buying media only for people who match the actor's biography. Separate the creative situation, the accessible service area and the distribution decision.

Byron Sharp challenges assumptions that brand growth depends on finely differentiated customer types, emphasizing reach, availability and recognition. Jon Steel emphasizes understanding people and involving their perspective in development. These emphases need not be flattened into a single rule. Use the audience inquiry to find a meaningful problem; do not automatically turn every observed difference into a separate target market.

A practical threshold for this guide: create a separate execution when a difference changes the promise, the necessary evidence, the action or access to the offer. Keep one execution when the difference merely changes the description of the person in the deck. This is a working economy of effort, not a scientific law.

Borrow Bench needs different reservation instructions because the channels differ. It may not need separate films for every occupation, age bracket or household arrangement. If a team proposes another version, ask them to show the specific misunderstanding or barrier it resolves. If they cannot, retain the hypothesis in the research notes instead of manufacturing another audience persona.

06 / PRACTICE

Challenge the regional shorthand

Invented exercise: a brief says, 'Young audiences in Market A want speed; families in Market B want reassurance.' Available facts are limited: one branch has evening collection, the other closes at five, and the rental fee includes a basic demonstration. Rewrite the audience problem and draft two justified message changes. Do not invent research to rescue the original segmentation.

Model diagnosis: collection hours may affect whether people can use the service. A basic demonstration may help someone unfamiliar with the tool, regardless of age or household structure. We do not yet know who values speed or reassurance, and the brief's labels do not establish either preference.

Model copy for the evening branch: 'Collect your reserved tool until eight tonight.' Use this only when the exact hours and reservation status are confirmed. Model supporting copy for both branches: 'A basic demonstration is included at collection. Ask what your chosen tool can do before you leave.' Neither line claims universal availability, complete training or effortless use.

Why this answer works: it makes the service facts actionable and leaves psychological assumptions open. A next research question could ask potential renters which collection times would make a rental practical. Another could explore what they expect from a demonstration. Those questions can sharpen the work; they should not be presented as findings until someone has actually investigated them.

07 / WORKSHEET

Map a difference that matters

Choose one campaign and no more than three audience circumstances for this first pass. Use actual evidence where available. Label invented examples, assumptions and gaps so the map cannot be mistaken for completed research when it is forwarded to someone else.

The decision someone is trying to make, in their situation

Evidence: source, setting and what it does not establish

The difference that changes promise, evidence, action or access

Shared creative idea and the specific adaptation required

What to investigate next, with an owner and a practical method

Before adding a segment, complete its consequence sentence: because this differs, we must change this. If the second half remains vague, keep investigating.

08 / REVIEW

Make the map earn its place

Review the audience map with a person responsible for the real customer experience. A campaign may promise help that a branch cannot provide, or invite a language choice the service cannot support. Those mismatches are not solved by a more nuanced persona. They require an operational decision or a narrower, accurate invitation.

+ Every segment describes a relevant circumstance rather than a presumed national character.
+ Each proposed version resolves a named difference in the offer or its use.
+ The shared brand remains recognizable across versions and destinations.
+ Observations retain their setting and sample limits; hypotheses are still labeled.
+ The media decision does not automatically inherit every distinction used to develop the creative.

This method cannot determine market size, media efficiency or demand from a few interviews. Nor can it make meaningful differences disappear in the name of one universal human truth. Regulation, accessibility, language, pricing and distribution may create substantial differences that need specialized investigation. Keep the scope visible instead of treating either sameness or difference as a creative ideology.

Your deliverable is a small map, one shared campaign proposition and a documented reason for each adaptation. If a version exists only because the deck needed a local-looking slide, revisit the audience decision. If one version fails to explain an actual branch limitation, adapt it even when the shared campaign looks elegant without the extra information.

READING / PRACTICE / CONTEXT

Where the thinking starts

The methods, teaching scenarios, exercises and worksheets here are original synthesis. The books below inform particular decisions; their authors do not endorse this guide. Page references locate the supplied PDF editions and may differ from printed page numbers.

Jon Steel / Truth, Lies, and Advertising

PDF pp. 13-18

Audience involvement and attention to the consumer's relationship with the category inform the circumstance map. The invented observations in this guide are examples, not research reported by Steel.

Byron Sharp / How Brands Grow

PDF pp. 9-13

The emphasis on reach, availability, recognition and skepticism toward narrow customer types supplies a counterweight to excessive segmentation. The guide does not claim its adaptation threshold is an empirically established law.

Richard P. Rumelt / Good Strategy/Bad Strategy

PDF pp. 89-91

Diagnosis and coherent action inform the requirement that each audience difference change a concrete decision. The audience map and tool-rental examples are original synthesis.

Make the tools your own

Read the worked example, try the exercise before its model response, then use the worksheet on a real assignment. Print the worksheet at 100% or annotate a copy digitally. Check your actual product facts, audience context and production conditions before applying the advice.

THATCOPYADDICT / AHMED MOUSTAFA ELSHERIF / 2026