



PART 3

SITUATIONAL
impact.

A
POV By



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Welcome to the third installment of Ahzul's Cultural Fluidity series.

In **Part 1**, we established **Cultural Fluidity**: the understanding that culture is an active, living force rather than a static label.

In **Part 2**, we explored **Intersectional Identity**, revealing that a consumer's cultural self is part of a multidimensional ecosystem—in constant dialogue with their beliefs, demographics, lifestyle and more.

Now, we will explore the next important question:

If a person's identity is fluid and made up of different intersections, what determines which of those layers takes the lead?

This brings us to the third piece of the puzzle:



SITUATIONAL

impact.





The Contextual Equalizer: Dialing Identity Up and Down



Situational Impact is the reality that our environment acts as a subconscious trigger. Depending on the setting or occasion, certain aspects of our identity naturally rise to the surface while others recede into the background - all without us even realizing it.

Think of identity like a soundboard equalizer. A consumer carries all of their intersectional traits at all times, but the **context** (i.e., where they are, who they are with, and what they are trying to achieve) automatically and subconsciously adjusts the sliders.

In other words, every decision is a product of the whole self, but it is driven by the traits that have been "dialed up" by the situation at hand. Understanding this fluid shift is the key to unlocking consumer motivation.

SITUATIONAL IMPACT IN ACTION

To see how this plays out in real-world decision-making, let's look at how situational context dictates the purchase journey across different industries.





CASE 1:

The Insurance Journey (When Parental Instinct Overrides Cultural Taboo)

In some multicultural communities, including segments within Hispanic and Asian populations, **deeply rooted cultural beliefs can create barriers to purchasing life insurance.**

For some, discussing or buying insurance feels like **"betting against the future" or tempting fate**, resulting in a cultural mindset where **insurance is dialed down as a priority.**

However, the **situation can change dramatically when that consumer becomes a parent.** In the context of evaluating their child's future, the **"caretaker" or "provider" instinct is dialed up to maximum volume.**

In that specific situation, **the parental layer of their intersectional identity overrides the cultural taboo. The decision to purchase insurance isn't driven by their cultural heritage; it is driven by their situational need to protect their children.**

IMPLICATION FOR BRANDS:

Brands that message to the *cultural* tradition here run the risk of missing the mark; brands that message to the parental instinct, however, have the potential to tap into the heart of the decision maker.



→ CASE 2:

The "Guilt-Free" Heritage Shortcut (When Career Equity Overrides the "Labor-as-Love" Mandate)

In many cultures (notably within Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Asian households) food serves as a primary language of care. Within these **heritage-driven environments, "love" is often measured by manual labor**; consequently, bringing a store-bought shortcut to a family gathering can feel like a cultural transgression.

However, identity isn't a static setting; it's a fluid response to the specific occasion.

Consider the same individual in a different context: hosting a game night or a post-soccer gathering for their children. In these settings, the **"Cultural Anchor"** recedes, and the **"Efficient Project Manager"** persona takes over.

→ FAMILY GATHERINGS:

Success is defined by tradition and heritage. The "labor-as-love" mandate is prioritized.

→ CASUAL SOCIALIZING

Success is defined by presence and community. Efficiency outweighs the need for manual preparation.

IMPLICATION FOR BRANDS:

Choosing convenience (like ordering pizza) isn't a rejection of heritage; it is simply a different facet of identity coming to the forefront. Brands that recognize these situational shifts can communicate more effectively, offering solutions that alleviate guilt rather than risking alienation.





Now let's take a deeper look at the meal prep paradox case study we just spoke about.

As we know, identity is not static, but rather like a **soundboard equalizer**. Depending on the situation at hand, certain aspects of a consumer's identity will be dialed up vs. down when they are making decisions.

In the meal prep scenario, a **family-forward situation** dials up the 'cultural anchor' and 'labor-as-love' sliders. Conversely, during a **career sprint**, the 'professional trailblazer' and 'strategic optimizer' layers take the lead.

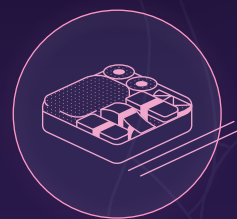
Ultimately, identity is fluid—it is the **situation** that determines which layer drives the final decision.





THE SITUATIONAL impact

Equalizer: MEAL-PREP PARADOX

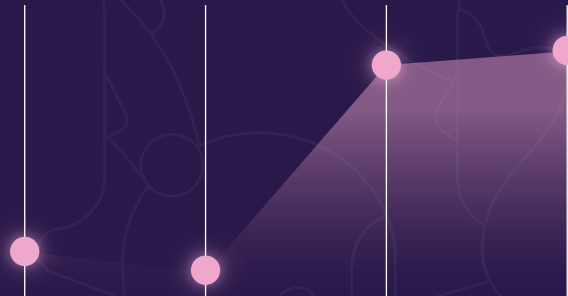


SITUATION:
THE CULTURAL NORM
(NURTURING/FAMILY FOCUS)

SITUATION:
THE CAREER SPRINT
(SUCCESS/EFFICIENCY FOCUS)

CULTURAL ANCHOR LABOR-AS-LOVE PROFESSIONAL TRAILBLAZER STRATEGIC OPTIMIZER

CULTURAL ANCHOR LABOR-AS-LOVE PROFESSIONAL TRAILBLAZER STRATEGIC OPTIMIZER



IDENTITY IS FLUID: SITUATION DETERMINES THE LEAD LAYER





APPLYING SITUATIONAL impact to Research & Strategy

If the aspects of identity a consumer taps into shift based on the moment, our approach to reaching consumers should shift as well. This framework requires us to rethink our methodology:

➤ MAPPING THE OCCASION, NOT JUST THE PERSON:

Instead of only asking "Who is this consumer?", it is helpful to ask "Who is this consumer *in the context of this specific choice?*" Considering the drivers (e.g., product category, immediate need state, or the specific problem they're trying to solve) that dictate which identity layer(s) takes the lead and influences their decision is also important.



➤ DYNAMIC MESSAGING:

Recognizing that a consumer may be highly receptive to a heritage-based message in one context (e.g., family gatherings) but completely tune it out in another (e.g., professional environments) because a different facet of their identity has taken the lead.

➤ DESIGNING FOR THE MINDSET:

We design research to capture the consumer in the moment. We ask them to recount specific occasions rather than broad preferences, ensuring we uncover which part of their multidimensional self is taking the wheel during that exact decision.





The Strategic Imperative

Situational Impact allows brands to move beyond static personas to dynamic occasion-based marketing.

When you understand that **consumers activate different parts of their identity depending on the situation**, you stop treating consumers as static, two-dimensional personas that require one generic message. **Instead, the strategic imperative becomes: Identify the situation, understand which aspect of the consumer's identity is dialed up, and meet them exactly where they are.**

WHAT'S NEXT: Measuring Fluidity

- We have now unpacked the theory of modern identity: it is **Fluid, Intersectional and Situational**. But how do we actually capture this in a measurable, strategic way?

IN OUR FOURTH AND FINAL INSTALLMENT, WE WILL INTRODUCE HOW WE AT AHZUL BRING THIS MODEL TO LIFE. WE WILL SHARE ACTIONABLE, PROPRIETARY METHODOLOGIES DESIGNED TO HELP BRANDS NAVIGATE THIS NUANCED LANDSCAPE WITH CONFIDENCE AND PRECISION.



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