

# Siendo restaurantera

Daily practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City



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*Daily practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City*

*Which factors affect daily practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?*

'Siendo restaurantera' is Spanish for 'being a female restaurant owner'

Artwork title page: Diego Masayoshi Saito – colleague and friend at Fundación Placemaking México.

Chris van Balen

s1019048

Supervisor: Dr. Rianne van Melik

July 1st, 2024

Master thesis Urban and Cultural Geography

Radboud University

**FUNDACIÓN**  
**PLACEMAKING**  
**MÉXICO**

**Radboud University** 

## Preface

As part of the master Urban and Cultural Geography, I conducted a qualitative research on the daily practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City. The start of this process started around a year ago, when I heard I could do my internship at Fundación Placemaking México, at their office in Mexico City. I was assigned to lead a project about restaurants in the city. In the development of a plan for my thesis research, I knew I wanted to focus on gender, and I started to read about women in the restaurant industry. Having experience in the industry myself, I knew about the barriers that women face concerning sexual intimidation and tough working conditions. However, I was not prepared for the extreme low amount of women restaurant owners in the industry. It made me question the industry and all its' practices and structures. What are the experiences of the women who do own a restaurant in this industry? The win of Elena Reygadas a few months before I heard that I would be involved with restaurants in *her* Mexico City, enforced my choice for this research on women restaurant owners even more.

Despite this, I would have never expected how much fulfilment this research would bring me. During the conversations with the restaurant owners, it was made clear to me how much they valued that someone wanted to hear about their experiences, and did research to their practices. This made me even more motivated to share their stories. Therefore, I want to express my deepest appreciation to those eight women (whose names remain anonymous): Carmen, Elena, Elisa, Gloria, Lorena, María, Raquel and Rita.

Furthermore, I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Rianne van Melik for her help and guidance throughout this thesis process. You gave me confidence in writing this piece and I truly appreciate all your time, feedback and conversations that we have had. I am very happy that you have been my supervisor throughout this process. Moreover, I want to thank Guillermo and Lucy for offering me the opportunity to do this internship at Fundación Placemaking México, and Cristina for her guidance throughout my internship period from September to December at the office. I have felt very welcome since the first day in the city, and I have enjoyed every day with all of my colleagues – who I want to thank for the good times. Also my deepest thanks to Diego, my colleague and friend who has illustrated the artwork at the front page of this paper. He has made this illustration especially for this paper, making it the most beautiful and fitting cover that I could think of.

Last of all, I want to thank all of my friends and family in Mexico City and in the Netherlands.

Hopefully you enjoy reading this research on female restaurant owners, and I hope it sparks a similar feeling of need for action and change as that I felt while writing it.

Have a good reading.

Chris van Balen  
Nijmegen, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2024

## Abstract

With numbers of only under four per cent of all chefs with three Michelin stars being a woman (UN Women, 2020), and only eight restaurants in the top fifty best ranked restaurants in Latin America being owned by a female chef (Asociación Mexicana de Restaurantes, 2021), this research explores the daily practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City, aiming to explore why they are so underrepresented in the industry. A practice theory research framework has been used, investigating the roles of meaning, material and competences (Shove et al. 2012) in the building up of practices by the women. In this research, a practice theory framework has been combined with a feminist theory framework, being applied in the form of the embeddedness of practices. The practices of the women have been studied through eight interviews, and multiple observations. Concluding findings are that the team is of great importance to the restaurant owners, valuing their employees the most. Furthermore, women restaurant owners experience prejudices and gender role incongruity. Lastly, safety concerns had the consequence that the women adjusted their opening times; portraying the impact of the context on the practices of restaurant owners. Recommendations that arise from this research are the set up of women support groups for female restaurant owners and safety actions.

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# 1. Introduction

*"My home, Mexico City, is a place where many Mexicos coexist. The ancestral Mexico is still here, but there is also a contemporary Mexico. You can see the multiplicity of times and the passage of time in the present, and that is unique. Here, food is not only in the streets and people's houses, but also in murals and in our culture. (...) I'm a cook in the middle of the world's largest, most complex and most diverse metropolis, which has an incredible richness in its culture and gastronomy. As a chef, I feel that I'm a product of all that. I want to share this award with the women who cook on a daily basis. I don't mean just chefs in professional kitchens. It's for all the women who cook at home every day and who are also mothers and providers. I want to promote women's leadership in restaurants. I've already started – but there's more I want to do"* (Reygadas, as cited in Sgarbi, 2023).

With these words Elena Reygadas commented on winning the award for being the world's best female chef of 2023, in Spring last year. Elena owns the restaurant Rosetta in Mexico City, serving reinterpretations of traditional Mexican dishes, which opened in 2010 (Sgarbi, 2023). As Elena describes in her speech, she wants to promote women's leadership in restaurants. In the highest segment of the restaurant industry, entailing all restaurants with three Michelin stars - and including Reygadas - under four per cent of the chefs is a woman (UN Women, 2020). Of the top fifty best ranked restaurants in Latin America, only eight restaurants are owned by a female chef (Asociación Mexicana de Restaurantes, 2021). While exploring the reason why women are underrepresented in the industry, the documentary *A Fine Line* by Joanna James (2018) sheds a light on the discrimination and barriers that women face when running a restaurant business (James, 2018).

In the same month as the win of Elena – April 2023 - owners of small independent restaurants in Mexico City could apply for a fund to use for their restaurant. The grant was aimed at restaurant that generate community in the neighbourhood, and the 7500 USD could be used for renovations, activities or redesigning the business. Other than in Mexico City, this project also ran in Toronto, Tokyo, London and Sydney, helping thirty five restaurants in total (American Express, 2023). As women restaurant owners are underrepresented in the male-dominated restaurant industry and face hindrances in the industry, this research aims to gain an insight in the daily lives and experiences of female restaurant owners in Mexico City. In order to explore what factors influence the routines of those women, the position of the female restaurant owners will be approached by practice theory, stating that social life is made up by practices, and that practices are built up by the elements meaning, material and competences (Shove et al., 2012).

In this research paper, multiple abbreviations will be used. RB stands for restaurant business, including cafés, restaurants, bars and bakeries. The owner of such a RB is the restaurant business owner, abbreviated by RO. The entrepreneurial environment in which these businesses are embedded and in which landscape the ROs work, is referred to as the restaurant industry, or RI.

## 1.1 Social relevance

The social relevance of this research is multi-faceted. First of all, this research is focused on small independent restaurant businesses, which generate community in their neighbourhood (American Express, 2023). RBs are spaces where people can meet and where activities are organised. Moreover, small restaurants are involved with the local community, by creating jobs and buying goods at local suppliers (Leach, 2017). Through researching the practices of the female owners of these spaces, knowledge is retrieved about the functioning of these businesses and their daily ins and outs. While researching the practices of the owner of such a business, the embeddedness is consequently studied as well; as practices are dependent on their context. By this study on practices of female ROs, a deeper understanding of their restaurant practices, even as the context of the RBs will be given.

Secondly, this study has the objective to gain understanding of the working environment of women ROs specifically, aiming to be able to give insights to promote women's leadership in restaurants. By investigating the practices of the women ROs, opportunities and hurdles will be explored, hopefully leading to practical recommendations regarding policies that encourage women to get in the business.

By putting this research in a feminist framework, more insight in gender inequality is retrieved. For female restaurant owners, this research might therefore be a platform to express their experiences, which can be brought to light to policy makers and society. As gender inequality is deeply rooted in society's structures (Brush et al., 2018), this research contributes to an understanding of society's structures and practices and aims at finding ways to tackle the problem of gender inequality.

## 1.2 Scientific relevance

The scientific relevance of this research is mostly based on the fact that women-led restaurants are overall barely researched. There has been a research by Ketchum (2019), on the challenges of female restaurant owners in the US and Canada in the 1970's and 1980's, which creates insight in the way that female restaurant owners functioned at the time. However, more recent studies to female restaurant owners are lacking. Furthermore, most studies on neighbourhood restaurants are about health effects (Abrahamsson, et al., 2023; He, et al., 2012), the way in which the amount of restaurants in a neighbourhood affects the amount of home cooking (De Pinho, et.al., 2018), or organizational structures (Leach, 2017); not including their practices and embeddedness. Research by Wellton et al. (2016) has investigated restaurant practices of small independent RBs in the Swedish countryside, using practice theory by Shove et al. (2012). resulting in an overview of daily practices of these restaurant owners. In this research, a specific call for research on gender perspectives on the organisation of restaurant work has been given in the notions for future research. Therefore, researching the practices by a feminist theory framework will answer this call for further research, combining feminist theory and practice theory in the field of restaurant ownership.

Other than research to female restaurant owners, much research has been done to female entrepreneurship. However, almost all of these researches are about organizational structures, personality traits of female entrepreneurs, or compare females to males (Baughn et al., 2006; Bullough et al., 2014; Jennings and Brush, 2013; Welter and Smallbone, 2011).

These subjects do contribute to a better understanding of female restaurant owners, but do not cover their practices. Moreover, researches to female entrepreneurship are often focused on the

balance of being an entrepreneur and mother (Ayatakshi-Endow et al., 2021)(Winn, 2005), overlooking the differences within groups of women.

Research of McKay (2001) broadened this perception by researching female entrepreneurs who started their business at the age of 50 or older. According to McKay, studies do not consider the consequences of the essentialism implicit in attempts to study the woman, or the female entrepreneur. In line with this notion, Mirchandani (1999) argues that approaches to women and entrepreneurship needs to be developed within feminist theory, in order to gain more insight on the gendered processes in practice.

Looking at the entrepreneurial work of women through a feminist framework will provide more insight into gendered, racialized and class-based processes which shape entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, this understanding would not only shed light on the experiences of these groups, but also on the experiences of *all entrepreneurs*, as well as on the notion of entrepreneurship itself (Mirchandani, 1999). A feminist lens will be applied to this research in two ways. Firstly, the women in this research will be studied in their own form, just as they are. This means that they will not be compared to male entrepreneurs, or are linked to motherhood. The women that are central in this research are studied as who they are: owners of restaurant businesses in Mexico City. Secondly, the daily lives of the ROs will be put into their context, following the notion of Anderson (1996). Inequality is reproduced in social structures in society, and practices are reproductions of those structures. By researching the practices within this embeddedness, the complexes of inequality will be exposed (Anderson, 1996). By researching the practices of women ROs in a feminist framework, the attention will be drawn to the gap between practice theory research, entrepreneurship and structural gender inequality.

### 1.3 Research objective and research questions

As the numbers have shown in the first paragraph of this chapter, women are underrepresented in the restaurant industry. The objective of this research is to illustrate the daily routines of female restaurant owners, aiming to explore the factors that affect those practices. Referring to Reygadas in Sgarbi (2023), it is a dream to promote women leadership in restaurants. By this study on the practices of female ROs, findings of the research can contribute to insights in ways to promote women leadership in restaurants. Furthermore,

The overarching research question in this study on women restaurant owners is formulated as:

*What factors influence the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?*

Firstly, the daily practices of the female ROs will be explored through the following research questions:

1. What are daily routines of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?
2. What are drivers for female ROs in Mexico City to run their business?
3. What do female restaurant owners in Mexico City need to run their business in terms of materiality?
4. What competences do female restaurant owners in Mexico City use to run their business?

After the practices have been brought to light, it will be studied how the practices are related to other practices that they perform when running their business. This is researched by the research question:

5. How do the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City interact and interrelate?

The context of the restaurants will be researched by the notion of embeddedness, in order to investigate what factors that are rooted in society affect the practices of women restaurant owners. The exploration of those factors is researched by the last research question:

6. How are the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City embedded in its socio-cultural, entrepreneurial and spatial context?

Research questions 5 and 6 are based upon the notion of zooming in and zooming out. By the act of zooming in on the practices that are performed by the female ROs in this research, direct factors that influence their practices are explored. The act of zooming out positions the practices of the RO in broader context. By studying the practices of the ROs on both scales, a complete insight of the daily lives of female ROs in Mexico City is expected to be given.

## 1.4 Reading guide

This thesis research paper is built up by six chapters. This first chapter has introduced the background of this research, giving an overview of the relevance and objective of the study. In the second chapter, the theoretical framework for the research will be given. In this chapter, all related theories and contemporary research on the topics practice theory (section 2.1), restaurant practices (section 2.2), women-led businesses (section 2.3) and feminist theory (section 2.4) will be discussed and analysed. At the end of chapter 2 the conceptual model of the research is presented in section 2.4. After chapter 2, the methodology that is used in this research is discussed in chapter 3. This chapter includes the participant selection of the women that are central in this research in section 3.1, and the methods that have been used to collect empirical data to explore the practices of those women in section 3.2. Furthermore, the positionality of the researcher and the limitations that are related to the method choices are discussed in section 3.3. Chapter 3 is closed by section 3.4 on the research location of the fieldwork, Mexico City.

After this description of the research location, the research changes to the empirical findings of the fieldwork in chapter 4: results. With practice theory being a theory that explains social life, this chapter brings real-life situations to this research paper. In chapter 4, all sections are introduced by small stories and observations that have occurred during the fieldwork period in Mexico City. In addition to those vignettes, quotes have been used to clarify the arguments that are made and bring life to the findings. In section 4.1 the daily routines of the ROs will be discussed. After this insight in the daily routines of the female ROs, the roles of the three elements of Shove et al. (2012) are highlighted. The role of meaning is discussed in section 4.2; the role of material is highlighted in section 4.3, and the role of competences in the building up of practices is discussed in section 4.4. After this insight in the daily lives of women ROs in Mexico City and the elements that build up the practices, three practice bundles will be highlighted in section 4.5. These practice bundles aim to portray the practices of women ROs through zooming in, exploring how practices interrelate and interact. In the last section of the results chapter a helicopter view is used to position the practices of the female ROs in relation to their context. In this section – section 4.6 – it is analysed how practices of female ROs are embedded in Mexico City through the

notion of zooming out. This position of the practices in Mexico City closes of the results chapter and leads it to the last chapter of the research paper, chapter 5. In this chapter, the overarching research question is answered in section 5.1, followed by the research limitations and recommendations in section 5.2. The final section of the paper, section 5.3, dives into the significance of the research, reflecting on sections 1.1 and 1.2. As an end to this research paper, policy recommendations arising from this research on daily practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City are given.

## 2. Theoretical framework

With the aim of positioning female restaurant owners and their practices in the embeddedness of Mexico City, a practice theory approach will be used. In this chapter 2, the theoretical framework of this research will be discussed, elaborating on the essence and use of practice theory in section 2.1, analysing different practice theory frameworks and elaborating on the framework of Shove et al. (2012). Furthermore, this section includes an overview of concept definitions that are central in this research. In section 2.2, the application of practice theory on restaurant work is presented, followed by a critical review of research on women-led businesses in section 2.3. Furthermore, the feminist lens in this research will be explored in section 2.4. Out of these ingredients the conceptual model has been developed, which is presented at the end of this chapter in section 2.5.

As touched upon in section 1.2, practice theory will be used in this research on experiences of female ROs in Mexico City. Before elaborating on the bigger picture of the practice theory framework in urban life, practice theory needs to be conceptualised further to be able to use it.

### 2.1 Practice theory

Practice theory has the central idea that social life is built up by practices, or acts of behaviour. The origins of the theory are rooted in the philosophies of Heidegger and Wittgenstein, and the sociologies of Bourdieu and Giddens (Shove et al., 2012). With the use of practice theory, Bourdieu aimed to show that there is an interrelation between objectivism (the belief that reality is independent from human perception) and subjectivism (the belief that the way we perceive reality is dependent on human perception, including beliefs and thoughts). He wanted to portray how resources – which are determined by the objective world – decide subjective experiences of this world, and their position within it (Ayling, 2019; Bourdieu, 1977).

According to Bourdieu (1977), a practice is a routine act of behaviour that is the result of internalized habits, which are shaped by someone's context and the objective structures in which the act is embedded. He uses the concepts of habitus (the skills and habits of a person, which guide behaviour), field (the context in which the practice is enacted, including rules and norms, and a network of relations), and capital. This capital exists in different forms, such as economic capital, social capital and symbolic capital, and influences the way in which individuals carry out the practices, and how they are positioned in their social network (Bourdieu, 1977).

Giddens extends this framework by focusing on the relationship between individual actions and social structures, stating that social structures shape those individual actions; while these structures are also reproduced and possibly altered by those actions. At the same time, Giddens argues that social life is built up by routinized behaviours of individuals, offering stability and predictability. Furthermore, Giddens argues that practices are situated in certain times and places, which contexts influence the way in which practices are enacted. Looking more closely at the individual that acts out the practice (or the practitioner), Giddens marks that individuals have the competency to act (also referred to as 'agency') and make choices. The actions that follow out of these choice, are affected by the social structures in which they are embedded, and individuals reflect upon their actions and context in which they are carried out. This aspect is called the

reflexivity of individuals, and gives the opportunity for one to change their practice to altering circumstances. Lastly, Giddens highlights that there are two ways in which individuals carry out a practice. He makes a distinction between practical consciousness, which leads habitual actions, and discursive consciousness, which refers to the capacity to describe actions and motivations. These practices are more thought through by the individual. In short, Giddens' view on practice theory offers a framework to understand the way in which everyday actions of individuals maintain and transform social life (Giddens, 1984).

These two theories of Bourdieu and Giddens have been widely developed and adapted by among others, Reckwitz (2002), Gherardi (2012), Shove, Pantzar & Watson (2012), and Schatzki (2003), resulting in multiple adaptations of practice theory.

Shove et al. (2012) argue that theorists Reckwitz (2002), Schatzki (2003) and Bourdieu (1990), look at practices as *enduring* entities that are reproduced through performance, which is no wrong interpretation according to them, but an extension is required when developing a convincing framework to understand how practices evolve and change. Due to this nature of practice theory, it is highly valued as a response to complex challenges, including addressing persistent patterns of inequality (Shove et al., 2012). As the framework of Shove et al. (2012) is focused on changes over time, the framework is considered to be well applicable to address policy changes and interventions. In this thesis research, the women ROs have received a grant to use for their RB, which can be seen as economic capital (Bourdieu). Together with the notion of the unequal contribution of women and men in the RI, and the aim to investigate gender inequality, as discussed in section 1.1, the framework of Shove et al. (2012) is considered to be the best fitting adaption for this research.

### 2.1.1 Shove's framework

Shove et al. (2012) build upon the notion of habitus by highlighting how habits and skills are rooted in everyday practices, breaking down practices into more specific elements of materials, competences and meanings. The theory of Shove et al. (2012) emphasizes how practices evolve over time by interactions of the three elements of material, meaning and competences, which is portrayed in figure 2.1. This is in line with Bourdieu's notion on the transformation of social structures (Bourdieu, 1977).

Furthermore, the notions of field and capital are not mentioned specifically, but Shove et al. focus on the relations between practices, and how these practices are maintained. This notion aligns with Shove et al.'s extension of Giddens' framework, as Shove et al. (2012) emphasize the way in which routinized actions are sustained and altered through the constant interconnectedness of materials, competences and meanings. Lastly, Shove et al. (2012) aims at portraying the dynamics of practices, and show how certain practices evolve over time; following a time-space frame. As the distinguishment between the three elements is used to analyze how practices are formed and alter, this is an adaptation to the frameworks of Bourdieu and Giddens, which are less focused on changes in practices.

In the theory of Shove et al., certain practices (such as cooking), are made up by elements, which are actively combined. The following elements are distinguished:

- *"Materials: including things, technologies, tangible physical entities, and the stuff of which objects are made;*
- *Competences: which encompasses skill, know-how and technique;*  
*and*
- *Meanings: in which we include symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations"* (Shove et al., 2012, p. 14).

Furthermore, practices *"emerge, persist, shift and disappear when connections between elements of these three types are made, sustained or broken"* (Shove et al., 2012, p.14). When linkages are sustained, elements shape each other when making up a practice. This is portrayed in figure 2.1 underneath.

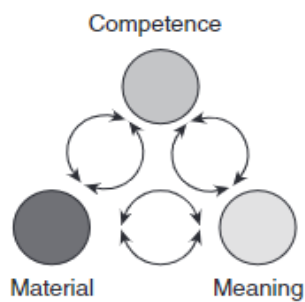


Figure 2.1: Elements shape each other (Shove et al., 2012, p. 32)

In the example of cooking, the practice is made up by material (pans, knife, vegetables, etc.), competences (knowing the recipe of the dish by heart, or following a recipe), and meaning (wanting to prepare homemade dinner for friends, nutrition). Without material, such as the products for the dish and kitchen cutlery, the practice of cooking is unable to be performed. Aiming to give a more concrete definition of a practices, practices can therefore be considered to be actions that are performed by practitioners, built up by materials, competences and meanings.

Similar to the way that elements are linked together to shape practices, practices also are linked to one another, being part of a larger network of activities and routines. Shove et al. (2012) have distinguished two concepts to describe the way in which practices are related to each other: *practice bundles* and *practice complexes*.

Practice bundles refer to practices that are performed in the same space, or depend on 'co-location', as described by Shove et al. (2012). Bundles are part of a routine of an individual, and can occur simultaneously, independently or in a sequence. Practices that are part of a practice bundle are not integrated, and can exist independently from each other. However, they do share common materials or competences. According to Shove et al. (2012), bundles are considered to be patterns that are based on practices that are based on 'co-location'. In an example of having dinner at home; the practice of having dinner in the living room is related to other practices that are located in the living room, such as watching tv, or drinking tea and reading a book.

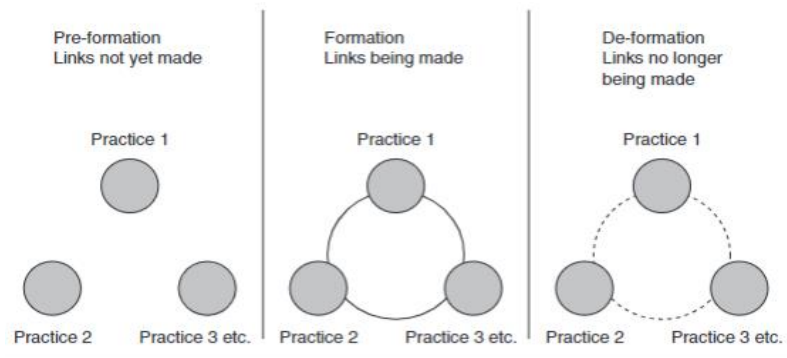


Figure 2.2: the pre-formation, formation and deformation of connections between practices (Shove et al., 2012, p. 83)

To refer to practices that are more integrated with each other and which are closely linked, the concept ‘complex’ is used. Practice complexes are larger than practice bundles, and are linked in a way that a change in element in one practice, also changes the elements of other practices in the practice complex (Weenink, 2016). An example that is related to the explanation of practice bundles, would be that “throwing a dinner party at home” involves a complex of practices that need to be performed: sending invitations, doing groceries, preparing dinner, welcoming guests and cleaning up afterwards.

The different adaptations to practice theory all make use of different concepts of the connections of practices.

Just as Shove et al. (2012), Schatzki uses the concept of bundles, or rather practice-arrangement bundles. Even though the word that is used is similar, Schatzki’s perception of bundles is slightly different. Other than Shove et al. (2012), Schatzki (2019) does not include material as a part of a practice, but argues that material arrangements are linked organisms and things. When referring to practice-arrangement bundles, he therefore refers to sets of material arrangements and social practices that are interconnected. According to him, practices are responsible for their own spaces in these bundles, and also contribute to other bundle’s spaces. Simultaneously, practices affect the spaces of other bundles. In other words, changes in practices result in changes in bundles. Also actions of material entities have the consequence of altering arrangements and spaces (Schatzki, 2019).

Even though Shove et al. (2012) argued that practice bundles are independent from each other, and therefore being different from the bundles that Schatzki (2019) refers to, Weenink (2016) has stated that Shove’s concept of ‘*complex*’, refers to practice-arrangement bundles that are located at specific cases, such as hospitals or airports. However, as Schatzki (2019) and Shove et al. (2012) have different perceptions on the interdependency of practices within a bundle, this statement by Weenink (2016) desires to be assessed with this critical note of the different concepts of practice bundles by Schatzki (2019) and Shove et al. (2012).

However, Schatzki’s (2019) view on practice-arrangement bundles as practices that are interconnected and influence each other is considered to be closer to reality than the notion of Shove et al. (2012), stating that practices can occur independently from each other. Therefore, it has been chosen to assess the concept of interconnectivity of a practice bundle by Schatzki (2019), and the idea of Shove et al. (2012) as a practice complex. In order to clarify these different concepts that have been discussed, an overview of the most important concepts that are implemented in this research will be given.

Following these notions, the definitions that are used in this research are therefore:

Practice = actions that are performed by practitioners, built up by materials, competences and meanings

- Material: including things, technologies, tangible physical entities, and the stuff of which objects are made
- Competences: skills, know-how and technique
- Meanings: symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations

Practice bundle = set of practices that hang together and are interconnected in more or less strong and enduring ways. Practices are built up by competences, meaning and material, and the practice bundle changes when one of the practices alters, or one of the elements alters.

Practice complex = larger sets of practices that are located at a specific location, or in other words, a phenomenon that is built up by various practice bundles. In this research, the practice complex refers for example to *'running a restaurant'*.

Figure 2.3: definitions of concepts that are used in this research paper, as adapted from Shove et al. (2012) and Schatzki (2019)

To summarise this introduction on practice theory, practices are built up by the elements competences, materials and meanings. Practices are located in practice bundles or practice complexes. As they are all related to each other, practices change when one of the three elements competences, materials and meanings change, or when the shape of one of the other linked practices alters, or in other words: when an element in one of the related practices alters (such as material), the whole practice alters, causing the other practices in the bundle to alter as well.

When studying practice complexes in particular – such as the daily routines of a restaurant owner – a helicopter view can be taken to identify the smaller practices and practice bundles that build up this complex by zooming in. Furthermore, zooming out can be used to identify the way in which the complex is embedded in the context (Nicolini, 2009). More on this notion will be discussed in the following section 2.1.2: zooming in and out.

### 2.1.2 Zooming in and zooming out

Elaborating on this framework of practice theory, a reflexive lens of *'zooming in'* and *'zooming out'* has been added by Davide Nicolini (2009). The act of zooming in and out helps to understand the conditions of the local practices, and the ways in which those practices are embedded in the context of our daily lives.

The aim of zooming in is to investigate the most important factors that build up a practice, and how they are interrelated. This refers to the three elements of material, meaning and competences. By zooming in on the shape of those elements, it can be studied how practices are built up by those elements on a small scale. When looking at phenomena on a bigger scale, the movement of zooming out is used. Zooming out has the objective of discovering the linkages of a practice complex in its context. By this notion of zooming in and zooming out, the connection between the practice itself as the way it is – for example, *'eating pizza'* – is put in relation to the

bigger context and related practices that are linked to this practice. According to Nicolini (2009), the double movement of zooming in and zooming out of practices is required in the methodology of theorising practices, gaining insight in practices by switching theoretical lenses and tracing connections between practices.

The next section 2.1.3 elaborates on the use of practice theory in urban studies, after which an overview on the daily practices of restaurant owners is given in section 2.2. The role of gender is discussed in the last section of this chapter, in section 2.3.

### 2.1.3 Practice theory in urban studies

Departed from the assumption that practice theory provides possibilities spatial theory and practice, the recently published *Reflecting on Practices* (Landau-Donnelly et al., 2024) discusses the use of practice theory in the field of geography and urban studies. This take-away is also the foundation of this research on the daily restaurant work, as restaurants are by nature part of the city environment, and – as argued by Landau-Donnelly et al. (2024) – reproduce urban life.

Building upon the use of practice theory in urban context, ways of doing and living are formed by practices, gaining a certain ontological autonomy (Sandberg & Tshoukas, 2019; de Haan, 2024). This ontological autonomy means that the objects or practices *only* have an essence in their relational form and performances in the context of practice. Therefore, spaces such as offices, cafés and public squares reproduce urban life only to that extent as they are part of everyday practices. During the pandemic those spaces were dislocated by imposed mobility restrictions, so that cities 'no longer worked'. Added up to this non-essentialist view on the world, practice approaches presume that objects are shaped and evolved in the fusing and gathering that is implied in such practices. As a consequence, objects gain their capacities within the context of specific practices that may carry over to other contexts, practices and objects of other sorts (Landau-Donnelly et al., 2024).

In other words, RBs - which are central in this research - are spaces where urban life is reproduced, as people gather and meet. RB's are considered to be third places; which are spaces outside of work and home, where people meet and get together (Tjora & Scambler, 2013). In this way, RBs contribute to community, as also has been described in the social relevance of this research in section 1.1.

In this thesis research, practice theory will be used to not only which practices are part of the daily life of female ROs in Mexico City and how these practices are built up, but also how these practices are influenced by the context in which the practices are embedded.

## 2.2 Restaurant practices

In order to research how practices are intertwined, related and embedded in their context, it is relevant to zoom into the daily practices in restaurants first. Research by Wellton et al. (2016) has used practice theory to research small RBs before, taking into consideration the elements of Shove et al. (2012).

Using the practice elements of knowledge and competencies, materiality and technology and creation of meaning, multiple categories of practices can be distinguished. All of these reported practices are portrayed in Table 2.1, classified in the activities *managing time and season*; *planning, strategizing and control*; *knowing and having skills*; and *dreams and life-style*.

Central elements (according to Shove et al., 2012)	Restaurant practices			
	Managing time and season	Planning, strategising and control	Knowing and having skills	Dreams and life-style
Knowledge and competence	Managing time	Finding and reaching customers/guests	Self-made	Love of location
	Workload/working life without limits	Intuitive leadership	Unskilled personnel	Capable doer
	Managing season	Dismiss networking Marketing by chance		Hospitality Creative personalities Restaurant race Seasonal stress
Materiality and technology	Mise-en-place	Local food strategy	Experience, skills, and knowledge	Renovations and decorations
Creation of meaning	Objects and places Concept, style, order, accomplishment	Faltering planning Doing and making	Mentorship instead of education	Recurrent gratification Dreams of own business

Table 2 1: restaurant practices (Wellton et al., 2016)

Different definitions are used to refer to the three practice elements, as defined in table 2.1 as *knowledge and competencies*, *materiality and technology*, and *creation of meaning*. In this thesis, it has been chosen to refer to the central elements of Shove et al. (2012) as *competences*, *material* and *meaning*, and therefore using different words to describe the three concepts of Shove et al. (2012).

### 2.2.1 Competences

In general, the RI is regarded as an industry with entry barriers that are rather low, with little demand for education or experience (Brouder & Eriksson, 2013; Getz & Peterson, 2005; Skalpe, 2003; Loannides & Petersen, 2003). In daily life and work, decision-making is built up of the elements of knowledge and competence. Chia and Mackay (2007) argue that everyday strategy-making is overly based on decisions that are taken effortlessly 'on-the-spot'. Consequently, to be able to ascertain the way strategy occurs in the field, focusing on the practitioner's background and practices that the person falls back on is relevant (Chia & Mackay, 2007).

In terms of know-how, experience of the Swedish ROs (Wellton et al., 2016) differed from having no experience at all to having much experience in the RI; and from having master's degrees in business administration, to taking industry-specific short courses in bookkeeping and leadership (Wellton et al., 2016). Both inexperienced and more experienced or educated ROs were hesitant to make elaborate plans for and evaluations of their businesses. As a result, most restaurants had a general lack of planning, strategizing and control in both daily and overall activities (Wellton et al., 2016), or stated differently; experience in the RI is sufficient in view of daily decision-making, but not when taking on more strategic decisions (Barnett & Koslowski, 2002; Pegg et al., 2011).

Intuition and gut feeling directed most of the business plans of the restaurant business owners (Chia and Mackay, 2007; Wellton et al., 2016). Overall, the ROs leadership approach was intuitive and consisted of being fair and nice to their team. ROs make all decisions and mediate any conflicts that arise immediately, even though they facilitate issues for their employees and are concerned about them (Wellton et al., 2016). The practice of daily leadership is often superficial, rather than conscious and reflective, and is often delegated to leaders that lack management competence (Caroll et al., 2007). Findings of Wellton et al. (2016) reveal that the daily work of running a RB is location bound, feeling the need to control and supervise their team daily. This is related to their employees being inexperienced and young. As a result, most ROs rarely are able to get time off themselves (Wellton et al., 2016).

### 2.2.2 Material

In RBs, materiality and technology determine physical and economic activities in the restaurant. Objects are in constant use by all practitioners, and need repair or replacement on a regular basis. This includes for example larger machinery, such as freezers or stoves. Moreover, outdated equipment is often in use long after it is hygienically appropriate. This forces work routines of employees to be adjusted. On a bigger scale than machinery, restaurant buildings are also regularly in need of repairs and improvements. Most ROs have developed the competence to handle all these practical problems that emerge in the areas of materiality and technology themselves, modifying the practice of knowing and having skills (Wellton et al., 2016).

Materiality and technology of RBs consists of a broad range of objects, but also of places that determine the practices (such as the establishment) and meals that are offered and produced in limited areas (Wellton et al., 2016). The practice of food preparation involves various objects, such as cutlery, pots, stoves, cash registers and so on. Kitchen preparations include actions such as peeling, butting and ensuring that all ingredients are in place to make sure the orders can be completed. In terms of hospitality in dining rooms, routines include the arrangement of tableware, adjusting menus and overlooking the atmosphere in the establishment (Wellton et al., 2016).

Running a restaurant or café requires significant funding. Owning a restaurant means paying for rent, equipment, decoration, and supplies (Ketchum, 2019). ROs mostly used personal funding to

retrieve capital for their businesses. They do not make formal business plans, use cost-cutting strategies to survive and do not have formal education, or only a little (Loannides & Petersen, 2003). Not having the right tools was one reason for having difficulties in adjusting to demand variations (Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff, 2010). To maintain a solid income in the RB is difficult, and real estate is used as a direct source of income in order to survive. Another way is the reinvestment of earnings into the restaurant, for example by doing repairs. The practice of renovating and redecorating is a constitution of materiality and technology, as well as knowledge and skill (Gherardi, 2009; Wellton et al., 2016).

Looking more closely at the situation of women ROs, research on owners of feminist cafés and restaurants in the United States and Canada in the 1970's and 1980's concluded that for women, obtaining a start amount of money to open an establishment was difficult. Founders of feminist RBs faced barriers in securing financing and maintaining economic stability of the business. Furthermore, female restaurant owners navigated bank financing, personal finance networks, and the experience of running a loss making enterprise, while simultaneously creating new strategies to keep their heads above water (Ketchum, 2019).

### 2.2.3 Meaning

The creation of meaning is considered to be the consequence of reforming processes of associations (Shove et al., 2012). As practices are developed through the constant and dynamic refinements of their practitioners, flexibility and innovation are linked to the way that practices can change or modify over time (Gherardi, 2012).

The practice of dreams and lifestyle that are portrayed in table 2.1 are constituted by personal creativity as a trait, and the ROs love for the location of their business and meeting guests (Cederholm & Hultman, 2010; Wellton et al., 2016). Moreover, creating, executing new ideas for their RB, independence, and the feeling of having done well are important. Other than not only doing well, the joy of hosting and hospitality and serving a meal or product of quality are also contributing to the meaning of ROs. Conflicting with this is the practice of time management. Restaurateurs' exhaustion from long working days is avoiding them to meet their guests, handing over this practice of hospitality to their team. In terms of quality control this is illogical and conflicting, which is discussed in 2.2.1 as well; referring to the conflict of controlling the practices in the restaurant and not having time off from the RB. Another conflict is related to the reinvestment of capital in renovation and repair. ROs state that they are lacking motivation to make a profit. However, unexpected hard and time-consuming work may decrease their incentive to develop and expand their businesses in the long run. They will have to sell out or reduce the capacity of their RB in the long run instead. As this is suggesting satisfaction and willingness for development, this is a conflict in terms of lifestyle practices and personal dreams as well (Wellton et al., 2016).

ROs fulfil their dreams of having their own businesses, responding to the motivation of self-employment and independency. This weighs heavier than making profit (Wellton et al., 2016). Owning an RB provides ground for a symbolic status in the community, as well as the privilege of RB ownership and the opportunity to make a personal and aesthetic statement (Fine, 2009), contrasting the hard and long working days (Hultman, 2013; Parsa et al., 2005). Being in an enjoyable and fun working environment, together with co-workers, is a reason to be in the RB (Balasz, 2002).

In the research by Wellton et al. (2016), all ROs embraced a local food strategy (see table 2.1). Food courses, menus and regional food concepts used local food products in daily cooking, suggesting that supply and logistics function without problems. However, problems with delivery

do occur (Wellton et al., 2016). Combining the practice theory that has been discussed in 2.1, this supply problem alters the arrangement in which the cooking practices are embedded. As the supplier is unable to deliver food products to the restaurant, the material that is needed to act out the practice of food preparation is affected, as it is dependent on this food delivery. At the same time, immaterial alterations or roadworks might be at the base of this logistical problem; which portrays the co-dependency of practice-arrangements.

Having discussed the restaurant practices in the form of *zooming-in*, it is now essential to research the positionality of the ROs in its context, *zooming out*. This will be discussed in section 2.3, on women-led businesses.

## 2.3 Women-led businesses

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis in chapter 1, only four of the fifty best ranked restaurants in Latin America is owned by a woman. Globally, all restaurants with three Michelin stars, under four per cent of the chefs is a woman (UN Women, 2020). Led by this unequal distribution of men and women in the industry, this thesis research investigates how gender is constructed and reproduced in the practices of female ROs.

In this section, the contemporary state of research on entrepreneurship and gender is discussed, aiming at extending the research framework with a gender perspective. This section explores studies on female entrepreneurship in section 2.3.1, and leads to the way in which a feminist lens is applied to this research in section 2.4.

### 2.3.1 Female entrepreneurship

Owning a restaurant business means being an entrepreneur. '*The entrepreneur*' was historically seen assumed to be a male (Green & Cohen, 1995). As touched upon in the social relevance in section 1.2, studies on entrepreneurship and gender mostly focused on comparing women to men entrepreneurs, mainly investigating personality traits, motivations, skills and knowledge, access to resources and barriers to success (Green & Cohen, 1995).

Conclusions of these studies are for example that mothers are primarily the caregivers in the family, regardless of their professional status. This causes it to be challenging to balance the demands of having an own business with family responsibilities (Winn, 2005). This caretaking role can be seen as a barrier to starting an own business, as it can be difficult to put energy into setting up a business. On the other hand, researchers Orhan and Scott (2001) discussed that women rarely reach a senior position at an enterprise before the end of 30, giving them a reason to begin for themselves.

Furthermore, these studies on female entrepreneurship do provide an insight on issues that women encounter, but they continuously overlook differences amongst women. In literature, female entrepreneurs of 50 years and older were largely ignored for example. McKay (2001) focused on this group of women, who started a business at a later stage in life than female entrepreneurs where earlier research was based upon. For the women in McKay's research, childcare and family obligations did not influence the entrepreneurship plans of the entrepreneurs for example. The main take of this research is that women have always tended to

be seen as a homogenous group in entrepreneurship research, facing the same pressures and having similar motivations (McKay, 2001).

### 2.3.2 Putting female entrepreneurship in context

As discussed in section 2.1.2, the context of practices influences one's actions, and the other way around. Practices are made up of both material and cultural elements and interpretations, and need to be studied in the context of other practices that are being carried out (Hui et al., 2016; Reckwitz, 2017). The spatial and social context that is described by Anderson (1996) is highly affected by culture, defining norms and values in society.

Looking at gender equality and businesses, Chow (2005) brought to light that even though some societies had a high level of gender equality (or gender egalitarianism), a relatively unequal proportion of men to women remained (Chow, 2005). Furthermore, research into management cultures concluded that organisations with mostly women in management positions had environments that are high on humane orientation, such as fairness, caregiving, generosity and kindness, and were focused on performance orientation, such as excellence, improvement and innovation; high on gender equity, and low on power distance, such as power distinction, status privileges and authority (Bajdo & Dickson, 2001).

Related to women-led businesses, Bullough et al. (2021) pointed out that culture was an aspect of female entrepreneurship that was generally understudied. Women's businesses are embedded in an environment that is complex and multi-layered: from the first ideas, throughout the development process and the business practices and growth. Therefore, there is a dynamical interaction of gender and culture, shaping gender role expectations and identities, even as the economic and social environment in which the businesses are embedded (Bullough et al., 2021). In order to deepen the knowledge on women's entrepreneurship and culture, Bullough et al. (2021) set up a study on female entrepreneurship in a range of societal and cultural settings, with a specific emphasis on women's entrepreneurship and culture; interactions between and within cultures and societies, similarities and differences cross-culturally; and the impact of and on culture. When talking about culture, specific beliefs, norms and expectations within a community are related indicators (Fu et al. 2004; Leung et al. 2005). The study investigated eight articles that can be categorised in three dominating streams in women's entrepreneurship and culture. These overarching themes of *societal cultural dimensions*, *gender role expectations & identities* and *entrepreneurial environment*, in which *gender role expectations & identities* is the dominating topic, have been put in the framework that is portrayed in figure 2.4.

In order to gain understanding of women's entrepreneurship and culture, all relevant literature will be discussed following these three overarching themes. This involves the eight articles that are discussed in the article of Bullough et al. (2021), but is extended by other studies on women's entrepreneurship that are considered to be essential. Furthermore, relevant studies on the RB are mentioned at the end of each theme as well, narrowing down the literature to restaurant business ownership. These three themes are considered to be part of the embeddedness in which the practices of female ROs are carried out. Therefore, these researches contribute to the understanding of the context of the ROs.

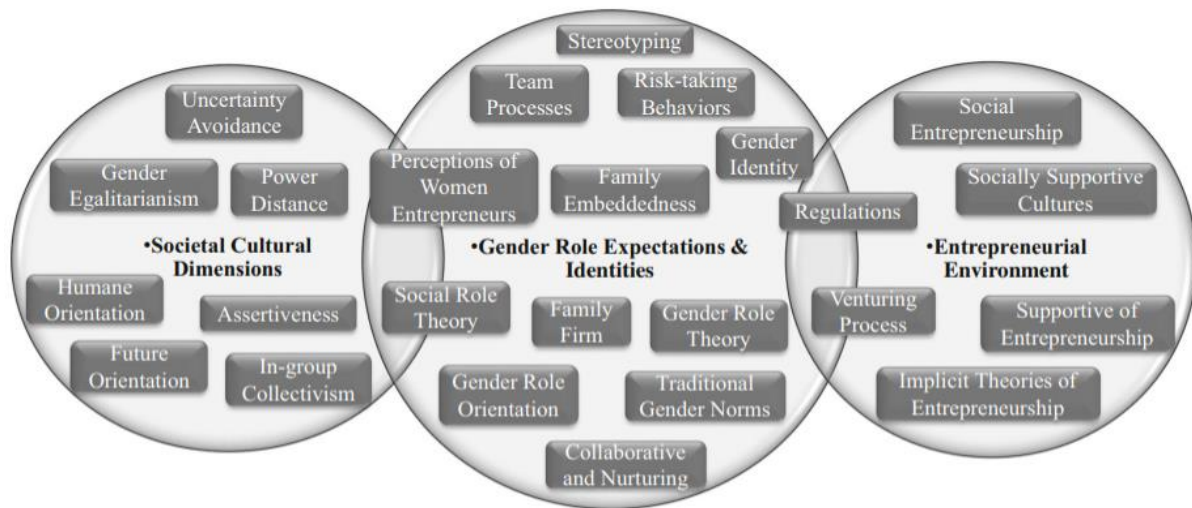


Figure 2.4: Framework for female entrepreneurship and culture research, as portrayed in Bullough et al. (Bullough et al. 2021, p. 987).

### 2.3.3 Gender role expectations and identities

Gender role expectations and identities is the overarching theme in women’s entrepreneurship and culture, built up by prejudices, ideas and attitudes against women.

Bias is often experienced by women, coming from perceptions of how women lead in practice and expectations of women’s leadership styles (Oakley, 2000; Prime et al., 2008). The theory of role incongruity means that people often discover incongruities between their ideas of leadership and the expectations that they have of the female gender role, or in other words; when women are considered to be less favourable than men as potential leaders, this leads to discrimination. Prescribed behaviours that are practised by a leader are viewed less preferable when this leader is a woman. This form of prejudice has the consequence that female leaders face less positive attitudes, creating hindrances for women to become leaders and accomplish leadership successes. This is a result of attributions of leadership being inconsistent with the expected behaviour for their gender role (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

With regards to personal traits, earlier research to female characteristics has suggested that women particularly thrive at empathy and judging emotions (Kirkland et al. 2013; Macaskill et al. 2002; Mandell & Pherwani 2003), meanwhile being associated with qualities as being affectionate, cooperative, collaborative and concerned for others (Yoder, 2001). Furthermore, women excel at building community and friendships (Ferriman et al., 2009), managing relationships that are sensitive (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 1998), and competencies as having a passion for diversity and intercultural diplomacy and empathy (Javidan et al., 2016). With respect to building a team for their business and running it successfully, women would therefore flourish in many of the skills that are needed (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Ruderman et al., 2002; Vecchio, 2002). Research by Ferriman et al. (2009) has shown that women are mostly associated with characteristics such as feminine, compassionate and communal, whereas men are linked to assertiveness, dominant and independent. This difference causes an incongruity between roles at the moment that women’s gender roles, such as nurturing and caregiving, are in conflict with the leadership characteristics that are perceived to be essential; assertiveness and competitiveness (Eagly & Mitchell, 2004; Gupta et al., 2019; Powell et al., 2002).

In this theme, role models play a big role for female business owners; often from within the family environment. Entrepreneurial parents learn and encourage their daughter, in which the daughters' self-efficacies and aspirations are influenced most powerfully by the mother (Greene et al., 2013; Hoffmann et al., 2015). Consequently, gender role benefits that arise from family support and other female role models are essential for women and their businesses. Particularly the *in-group* has been found to be important for the encouragement of the entrepreneur and her individual entrepreneurial goals. Culturally dependent, the in-group is defined differently, being a combination of family and close friends, or only family. The in-group is important in supporting a woman in her business by contributing to her access networks and resources (Bullough et al., 2021). Being influenced by close relationships and family members, role models also arise from individuals that are relatable to other women, inspire those women and emulate them (Markussen and Røed, 2017). By influencing women in their belief in their entrepreneurial capabilities, role models indirectly influence women's intentions to become an entrepreneur (BarNir et al., 2011) and characterising as a female business leader (Hytti et al., 2016).

For women it is harder to make entrepreneurial success and growth, due to the mentioned male-female stereotypes, gender role expectations and biases. This leads to a lack of funding capital for women-led businesses (Gupta et al., 2019; Prasad, 2009) and smaller professional networks (Kalafatoglu & Mendoza, 2017; Mitra & Basit, 2019).

#### 2.3.4 Societal cultural dimensions

The theme of gender role expectations and identities has been the overarching influence on women entrepreneurship and culture.

In this research, the definition of culture has been included as the beliefs, values, behavioural patterns and norms of a national group (Leung et al., 2005; Bullough et al., 2021). Culture as a concept can be seen at different levels ranging from basic assumptions that are deeply embedded and unconscious, to external manifestations that are tangible (Schein, 1992). Within these two extremes are the middle layers, which are values, rules of behaviour, beliefs and norms that impose basic ideas on the 'operation' of society members.

It is almost impossible to alter culture without creating anxiety in society, unless challenges or debates occur (Schein, 1992). However, it has been proven that this challenge and debate is needed for women to break the behavioural expectations and norms for their gender.

#### 2.3.5 Entrepreneurial environment

The third stream entrepreneurial environment describes a supportive environment for women's entrepreneurship to require an entrepreneurially constructive culture and unified systems with reciprocal features. Investments, human and financial capital, opportunities for growth and a combination of progressive and innovative institutional and infrastructural provisions (Bullough et al., 2021). Rules and policies can alter the attractiveness of entrepreneurship to women, influencing regulations and costs that are linked to business ownership (Manolova et al., 2017). Personal networks of female entrepreneurs are often built up by private spheres (Bertelsen et al., 2017), that involve friendship, kinship, professional or business relations, which are influenced by mistrust and religion (Mitra & Basit, 2019), societal expectations and culture (Surangi Hapugoda Achichi Kankanammge Nadee, 2018).

Bringing this notion of personal networks of female entrepreneurship to Mexico, research by Seligmann (2002) on Mexican female market vendors acknowledged that the breadth and depth of social networks constitute a rich source of capital. This network has specific characteristics and draws on early traditions and ethnicity. The network is not available to everyone and can only be inherited by subsequent generations. This network can be converted into economic, symbolic or political capital (Seligmann, 2002). This is in line with the elements in the gender role expectations and identities in figure 2.1, where family embeddedness is part of the framework.

The social position of people depends on possessions and volume of economic, social and cultural capital. Social positions are reproduced via habitus that get rid of actors to do particular things, as social and economic relations are mostly just 'lived', and not actively reflected upon (Holt, 2008).

In enhancing their ability to make a livelihood, market women value their social skills, information and social networks more than economic capital. Trading partnerships are often formed to maximise these resources that are critical to women's abilities to obtain a loan. Moreover, gender ideologies force women to value social capital more heavily. There are three ways to do so. Firstly, women tend to have less economic capital available. Secondly, women encounter greater obstacles to entry into alternative occupations, such as the restaurant industry, and thirdly, females have more knowledge about the ties of daily life that constitute to the material of social information and networks (Seligmann, 2002).

In the 1970s, as part of the women's movements, feminists began to critique gender inequity in a variety of workplaces, including restaurants. The main belief was that the relationships between restaurant managers and waitresses and between waitresses and customers systematically was disempowering women. The article *Cooking the Books* (Ketchum, 2019), examines how feminist restaurant and café owners in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada challenged management hierarchies, serving practices, and typical restaurant structure. In section 2.2.2, the conclusions that were drawn with regards to economic capital are discussed. As the political and economic system was hostile to women's business ownership at that time, for women of colour and lesbians in particular, owners founded their establishments in creative ways. For most women, obtaining this amount of money to open an establishment was difficult. Founders of feminist restaurants faced barriers in securing financing and maintaining economic stability of the business. Furthermore, female restaurant owners navigated bank financing, personal finance networks, and the experience of running a loss making enterprise, while simultaneously creating new strategies to keep their heads above water (Ketchum, 2019).

Research on women tourism entrepreneurs in Latin America identifies the social and structural inequalities that hinder growth in women's tourism business. Furthermore, the research highlights how women are at a disadvantage when it comes to gaining digital competencies as a result of macro gender digital divide and micro-level factors. Using digital technologies and digital platforms, such as social media, empowers women tourism entrepreneurs, but significant challenges and hindrances are faced. These barriers include a deficiency in digital competencies; a scarcity of access to devices, training and infrastructure; a reliance on supporting staff and family network; and worries about safety, security and balancing work-life (Khoo et al., 2023).

According to Brush et al. (2009) and Panta & Thapa (2018), female tourist entrepreneurs face several barriers, including a lack of business knowledge and skills and psychological barriers. As a result, a lack of confidence and self-efficacy can hinder women's progress in developing their tourism businesses (Hallak et al. 2015). Those barriers are directly or indirectly developed through institutional and sociocultural context that reproduces gender discrimination. These

hinders are further determined by culture. Cultural differences can influence the way in which women entrepreneurs' interactions with male customers are interpreted (Panta & Thapa, 2018), the division of household responsibilities between women and men (Olsson & Bernhard, 2021) and balancing work and family needs (Henry et al., 2017). In Mexico, female tourist entrepreneurs are vulnerable under a machismo culture, which ideology emerged from the Mexican Revolution at the beginning of the 20th century. The Mexican Revolution contributed to the 'rhapsody of manhood', or the macho culture in the country. This was expressed by indifference to danger, blaming women and affirmation of authority by males (Egan, 2001).

### 2.3.6 Backing female entrepreneurs

When addressing the challenges that are faced by female entrepreneurs, there are multiple strategies that are implemented to back women starting a business. One of the main approaches is to increase the access to capital, for example by creating more inclusive networks of investors and mentors. An environment that supports women's entrepreneurship needs to be home to an entrepreneurially constructive culture, containing investments and human and financial capital, growth opportunities, and a combination of innovative and progressive institutional and infrastructural services (Bullough et al., 2021). Policies, laws and cultural expectations are often opaquely and subtly gendered. However, the influence of gender is deeply rooted in society's norms, rules and practices (Brush et al., 2018).

Women face more gender-based barriers to ensuring capital for their enterprises. As a result of these barriers, female entrepreneurs secure smaller amounts of investment finances and lower bank loans (Balachandra et al., 2019; Kanze et al., 2017; Wilson, 2016). In order to help women overcome these challenges, policies are implemented to create a supportive entrepreneurial environment for female entrepreneurs specifically. These policies not only encourage financial institutions to finance investments funds and loans to female entrepreneurs directly, but also create and allocate specific financial products that are explicitly for women (Bullough et al. 2021). By attracting more female investors and establishing women-led funds that are invested in businesses that are led by women, more gender equity in funding practices should be created (Frešer et al. 2019).

## 2.4 Feminist theory

A feminist lens is added to this research in two ways. Firstly, this research only focusses on women, aiming to research the women themselves, and not to compare women to men. Their practices are central, gaining insight in their daily lives. Secondly, the context in which the practices of female ROs are embedded is taken into consideration, as society's norms and values that shape the context, are all gendered.

Referring back to Anderson (1996), it is necessary that embeddedness is assumed while researching practices. This notion of embeddedness means that individuals, groups and structures are located in social and spatial contexts, in which they enact their practices. In this section, this social and spatial context will be discussed and defined.

Related to Giddens, all decisions of where, why and how a business is run are highly influenced by gender. Individuals have agency and make choices, which are affected by the social structures in which they are embedded (Giddens, 1984). Therefore, every choice that one makes is determined by gender. According to Michandani (1999), existing knowledge on women and entrepreneurship can be enhanced by focussing on the *essentialism* of women, and centralising the ways in which relations between gender, occupation and organisational structures differently affect female and male business owners (Mirchandani, 1999). This understanding would not only shed light on the experiences of these groups, but also on the experiences of all entrepreneurs, as well as on the notion of entrepreneurship itself (Mirchandani, 1999).

When taking a practice theory perspective, the focus is not on a practice as an entity, but as the practice as how it is performed (Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Nicolini, 2013). As a result, solely practices that are being observed in action are considered relevant. Practices are made up of both material and cultural elements and interpretations, and need to be studied in the context of other practices that are being carried out (Hui et al., 2016; Reckwitz, 2002). As society is a result of the performance of practices, all practices that are present are gendered (Brush et al, 2018). Massey (1994) even makes it more specific, by stating that third places (including RBs) are gendered through their embodied spatial practices. Dolley and Bosman (Lorente-Riverola, 2019) state that Oldenburg (1999) tends to overlook the complex power relations that entangle gender identities within the sociocultural, political, historical and economic context of leisure practices, which are related to third places in social infrastructures of cities and conviviality of public life (Lorente-Riverola, 2019) In order to research structural practices of gender that are related to the daily practices of restaurant owners, the approach of Anderson (1996) is explored.

Anderson (1996) recognizes gender, race, class and other inequalities as categories that are dynamically interrelated, and that bring agency to structures. According to Anderson, *'a framework should explain the (re)production of inequality in terms of processes that are socially (re)constructed in various ways and are consistent elements of diverse social relations'* (Anderson, 1996, p. 733). Anderson argues that it is necessary that embeddedness is assumed. Embeddedness is the notion that individuals, groups and structures are located in social and spatial contexts. As a consequence, social action is conceptualised in multiple layers. Moreover, Anderson asserts that theories of inequality must incorporate the possibility of various processes, or social relations that have a historically relevance to the situation. Anderson notes that researchers tend to focus on key dimensions of inequality too often. Nevertheless, dimensions as class, race and gender interact and overlap. When the ideas of embeddedness and social relations are incorporated into models of inequality, the complexity of inequalities are exposed. This

eventually provides a more adequate understanding of the mechanisms that recreate the inequalities (Anderson, 1996).

Summarizing the most important highlights of this theoretical framework, social life is built up by practices, which are made up by the elements meaning, material and competences. The concepts that are related to this practice theory are portrayed in figure 2.3. Earlier research on practices of ROs (Wellton, 2016) has concluded that ROs experience varied from being experienced to being not experienced at all, and that leadership choices were often based on intuition, and in general, the RI is considered to be an industry with low entry barriers. Material that was part of practices of ROs included the physical establishment, kitchen entities and furniture, and motivations to start the business were dreams, the joy of working in a restaurant and a feeling of doing well. Focusing on women-led businesses, female entrepreneurs deal with prejudices, gender biases (Bullough et al., 2021) and a macho environment in Mexico (Egan, 2001). A feminist framework will be used in this research, following the notions of Anderson (1996) and Mirchandani (1999). How these theories will be conceptualised into a research model, will be discussed in section 2.5; the conceptual model.

## 2.5 Conceptual model

Rounding up this theoretical framework, practice theory will be used to research the daily lives of restaurant owners. Taking into consideration the idea of zooming in and zooming out (Nicolini, 2009), zooming in has the aim of unravelling local accomplishments of practices of the female ROs; and therefore discovering the practices of the women. To sketch the nexus of practice bundles that are part of the daily lives of these women ROs, zooming out is conceptualised as an influencing factor on the practices. By this notion of zooming out, the connections between practice bundles will be discovered, creating a deepened study on practices of female restaurant owners in the landscape of Mexico City, answering the question *what factors influence the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?*

The theoretical framework leads to the conceptual model that is portrayed in figure 2.5. Following the notion of embeddedness, as described in section 2.4, the practices will be researched in relation to the entrepreneurial, socio-cultural and spatial context of Mexico City. This context also includes the gender role and identities that are described by Bullough et al. (2021), as this is an overarching influence on female entrepreneurship. In this way, a practice theory framework is combined with a feminist framework in this research.

The practices of female restaurant owners are built up by materiality, competences and meaning. When zooming in, the relations within those practice-bundles are explored. Meanwhile, those practice-bundles are embedded in the context which is described as the entrepreneurial, socio-cultural and spatial context. This context is expected to influence the practices of female restaurant owners, as shown by the arrow from '*Entrepreneurial, socio-cultural and spatial context*' to '*Materiality*'; even though only seemingly referring to the materiality element, the context influences to the whole entity of '*Practices female restaurant owners*'. The triangle shape that marks the context, aims to portray the embeddedness of the practices in the context of Mexico City. This triangle has dotted lines, conceptualising the open and affective nature of the

context. The notion of zooming in and zooming out has been added in the form of lines that show the 'bordering' of zooming out; pointing from the practices to the broader context. This context is purposely put as the broader side of the triangle. The practices are in the middle of the triangle, and are portrayed to be part of practice bundles where practices are intertwined and dependent. This part of the conceptual model is researched by research question 1: *What are daily practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?* This question is divided over the three elements of Shove et al. (2012), resulting in the following research questions: *'What are drivers for female ROs in Mexico City to run their business?'*, *'What do female restaurant owners in Mexico City need to run their business in terms of materiality?'* and *'What competences do female restaurant owners in Mexico City use to run their business?'*

This process of zooming in is visualised by the narrow point of the triangle of the context in which the practices are embedded, aiming to portray how practices are intertwined when you take a closer look at them by zooming in. This part in the conceptual model is explored by research question 5: *How do the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City interact and interrelate?*

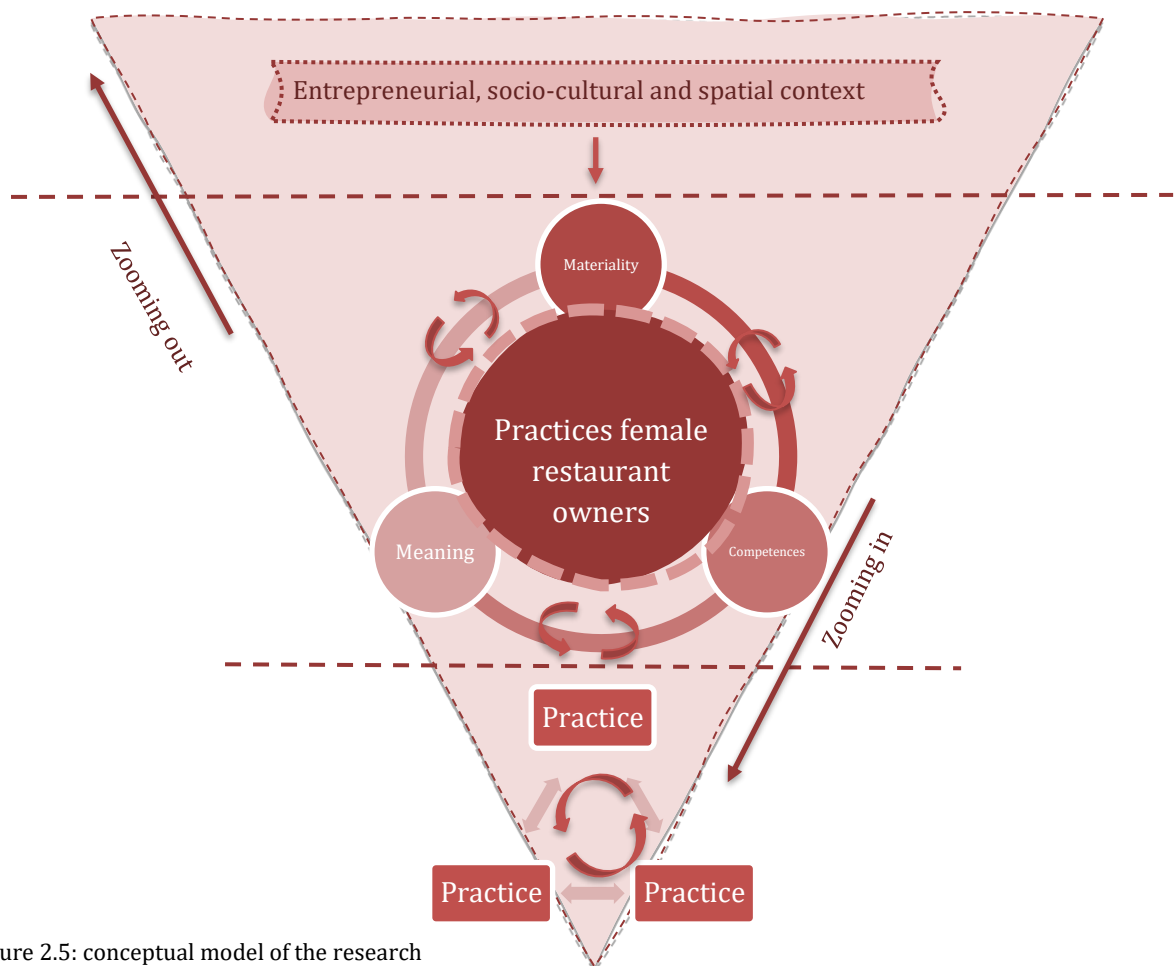


Figure 2.5: conceptual model of the research

The context of the restaurants will be researched by the notion of embeddedness, in order to investigate what factors that are rooted in society affect the practices of women restaurant owners, which is investigated by research question 6: *How are the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City embedded in its socio-cultural, entrepreneurial and spatial context?*

In order to gain insight in the practices of the female ROs, those research questions need to be translated into methodologies. In the next chapter 3 this turn from the conceptual model into empirical findings will be made, functioning as a bridge between the theory and real-life practices.

### 3. Methods

In this chapter the methodology of this research will be discussed. Following the ideas of practice theory, eight women restaurant business entrepreneurs in Mexico City were central. In order to research the practices and the context, a qualitative approach has been used. As described in Creswell (2007), *"we use qualitative research to develop theories when partial or inadequate theories exist for certain populations, and when samples or existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem we are examining. We also use qualitative research because quantitative measures and statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem"* (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Theorist Nicolini (2009) - of whom the notion of zooming in and out is used in this thesis research - even advocates against the use of quantitative research methods, as social practices are pre-reflective. This means that the actions occur before they are actively thought about performing them, making quantitative methods, such as surveys, unsuitable to use in practice theory.

In other words, qualitative methods allow to reveal the rich detail of practices and the way they are unravelled. When seeking to describe emotions, shifting practices, day-to-day situations or studying phenomena that are taken for granted, qualitative methods are indispensable (Lamers et al., 2017). Due to the examination of practices and gender in this research, qualitative research will be the most - if not only - suitable option for exploring the position of female ROs in Mexico City. The qualitative methods of interviewing and observations have given the opportunity to collect data on individual level. By exploring the practices of female ROs, this research is inductive; building theories from observations and empirical data (Creswell, 2007).

In feminist research approaches, the goals are to create collaborative and non-exploitative relationships; to locate the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification; and to conduct research that is transformative (Olesen, 2005). Henderson-King & Stewart (1994), suggest that researchers need to include their own position consciously and systematically, and that they need to assess how they impact their understandings of a woman's life. Moreover, researchers need to inquire into how a woman understands her gender, acknowledging that gender is a social construct that differs for each individual (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994). The research is focused on female restaurant owners. Noting that gender is a form of performativity (Butler, 2004), every restaurant owner of the program who identifies themselves as a woman has been included in this group.

Building on to these ideas of Olesen (2005) and Henderson-King & Stewart (1994) on conducting research with a feminist approach and following the ideas of Mirchandani (1999), the female RO is central in this research, researching every single RO as a unique entrepreneur, with unique characteristics. Practices of these restaurant owners and the contribution of the different elements to these practices will be researched in a framework of feminist theory. In order to research the context, which Anderson (1996) described as the embeddedness of the problem, observations and interviews were done. In this way, structures can be explored in the practices of the entrepreneurs.

### 3.1 Participant selection

In this research, eight women ROs with a business in Mexico City are central. These women have been approached through the internship organisation Fundación Placemaking México. In the Spring of 2023, restaurant owners in Mexico City could apply for a grant to use for their restaurant. The grants were aimed at small, independent restaurants that are led by individuals from groups that are '*economically vulnerable or underrepresented*' (American Express, 2023). Conditions to apply were that restaurants should be in operation, and have a physical location, meaning that digital-only businesses were not eligible. The grant is meant to help the small restaurants to boost their business, for example by improving the building, enhancing digital capabilities, revitalising dining spaces or making other improvements to the building (American Express, 2023). In September 2023, the twelve winners - chosen from about seventy applications in Mexico City - were chosen by the foundation and American Express. All of the twelve winners reunited at the office of Fundación Placemaking México in October, followed by visits to all of the restaurants during the last two weeks of October. During those visits, all female restaurant owners were asked to participate in this research. Out of the twelve winners, eight businesses had a female owner. These women were either running the business alone or with one or more business partners. All of the eight women who participated in the program also agreed to participate in this thesis research, resulting in a response rate of one hundred per cent.

In table 3.1 all women that have participated in the research are portrayed. In order to sustain anonymity, the names of the participants have been changed, just as the names of their business partners and/or employees that were mentioned in the interviews. Also the names of the RBs have been renamed. In order to maintain readability of the interviews, names of the participants have been changed to names of famous Mexican feminists, while all RBs have been given a name that refers to artwork of Mexican feminist artist Frida Kahlo. An overview of all respondents and their business is portrayed in table 3.1. The businesses have been ordered into being a café, restaurant or bakery. Both bakeries included a seating area too.

Name RO	Owner of	Business type	Age	Business partner	Opening year	Ideal when started - special remarks about business	Number of employees	Gender team	Special remarks about team
Elisa	Naranja	Café	27	Brother	2020	Making impact during pandemic  Concept has changed various times over the years	15	50/50	Queer employees  Wanted to hire a female barista, but did not come across one
Carmen	Los Raíces	Restaurant	33	Alone	2015	Dream to open a restaurant, traditional Mexican food	15	50/50	Queer employees
Elena	El Charola	Restaurant	32	Husband	2021	Chef, new cuisine to Mexico City	24	50/50	Majority of women in the kitchen
Lorena	La Molina and Coyo	Café and restaurant	31	Husband	2019	Started as a food truck for a European dish, still have this food truck for festivals 2 locations: café and restaurant	19 in total	75% women	
María	La Magnolia	Restaurant	41	Husband	2018	Bringing Italian food to Mexico City	13	50/50	Wanted to hire a female pizza maker, but could not find one
Gloría	La Adelita	Bakery	42	Friend (female)	2016	Feminist social bakery, creating community within women	13	Purposely solely female employees, 1 male employee	Half of the team is paid, other half is intern or volunteer
Rita	Arból de la Esperanza	Bakery	40	Brother	2020	Making bread during pandemic turned into business	8	50/50	
Raquel	Los Cachuchas	Restaurant	51	Brother and friend	Delivery at home: 2018 Restaurant: 2023	Traditional Mexican food in a creative space	6	50/50	Family business. Raquel has a second job as a graphic designer

Table 3.1: Overview of respondents and their businesses

Striking in this group of ROs is that all respondents were relatively young, being owners of young businesses. One participant runs the business fully by herself, all of the other seven participants have business partners; of whom three were the brothers of the RO. As research concluded that women are still the main caregivers of families (Winn, 2005) it is valuable to highlight that none of the women is a mother.

## 3.2 Data collection and analysis

In this research, data has been collected through observations and interviews. The data collection for this thesis research took place at the very start of the project in which the women participated. The project ran from October 2023 till March 2024, whereas the observations and interviews only took place in October, November and December 2023. To kick off the project and to tell the winners about the program, a reunion was organized at the office of Fundación Placemaking México in Roma Norte at the beginning of October. At this reunion, mostly male winners were present, and two female ROs were able to come to the office. After this first reunion, multiple visits to the winning restaurants were scheduled during the whole duration of the program till March 2024. The first visit was planned by the foundation to write a piece on all winning restaurants, interviewing the winners about their business and taking photos and videos of the establishment and food. Furthermore, questionnaires were distributed among personnel and guests, collecting data on the RB before the grant was used. These visits took about one to one and a half hour per RB, and were merely focused on the activities for the grant program. However, since these visits were moments of contact with the ROs, fieldnotes were taken after each of those visits, noting down practices that stood out. No observation protocol has been used during those contact moments, but after the visits some striking observations have been summarized in the form of recorded audio files. Some of these observations have eventually been included in chapter 4 in the form of vignettes, or in the portrait of a practice bundle; such as the pasta making practices in La Magnolía, as discussed in chapter 4.5.2. Furthermore, photos of striking entities or activities were taken, resulting in the photos that are included as figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6, giving an impression of the RBs and the context of Mexico City.

As these visits were focused on writing a piece on the winners for the internship organisation, the mere focus was on these activities. After those visits, the interviews with all female ROs were planned during November and December.

Furthermore, a reunion with all participants was organised after all interviews had been conducted, with the goal of all women to get to know each other. From the eight participants, five ROs were present at this meeting. On average, the participants have had three moments of contact, including the interview. Seven of the eight interviews have been conducted in the restaurant business of the women. One respondent preferred to reunite in a café, after which we agreed to meet and conduct the interview in a book shop café close to her business. The length of the interviews varied from one hour to two-and-a-half hours, depending on the elaboration of answers by the respondents.

The interviews have been conducted by a semi-structured interview. The interview guide is included in [attachment 1](#). Before the start of all interviews, small conversations about the restaurant or project took place, followed by simple questions such as age and opening of the business. After this start, questions about the development of the project and idea behind it (referring to meaning), establishment (material), daily practices, education and prior experience (competences) and employees were asked. Later, questions were asked about Mexico City and the restaurant industry, restaurants and community and the position of women specifically were

asked. In contrast to the research by Wellton et al. (2016), it has been chosen not to include questions about economic capital, or funding in the interview guide. As the women have won a grant, the interview has touched upon the investments that the women ROs have done with the money that they won. However, the role of income and money has not been included any further, as this felt inappropriate.

The order of the questions differed sometimes, depending on the conversation. As the research takes place in Mexico City and all of the respondents were Mexican, the interviews have generally been conducted in Spanish. Some respondents proposed to do the interview in English, as they did not mind talking in English to me as a Dutch person. After the interviews had been conducted, they were transcribed in the language that they had been conducted. Therefore, this could be either Spanish or English, and in some cases a combination of those two. Furthermore, field notes that were taken during restaurant visits and the reunions were collected and bundled. After the transcriptions were completed, it was made sure that no meaning was lost in translation by checking all interviews in an online translator. Moreover, all documents were altered to anonymous interviews; changing the names of the respondents, their business partners and/or employees that were mentioned and the name of their business.

All interviews were ended with the question if the women wished to get in touch with the other women ROs, in the form of a Whatsapp group and a reunion. All of the women expressed that they wanted to get involved, and a reunion with five of the eight respondents followed in the last week before Christmas. This reunion took place at Restaurante Coyo. At this meeting, the women got to know each other and discussed topics as influencers, solicitation procedures, the hectic days of Christmas, the ways they use the grant money for their business and influencers. During this group meeting, the researcher purposely did not have an active role, as the objective of the meeting was for the women to get to know each other in an informal way. Some fieldnotes on this meeting have been added in [attachment 2](#), giving an insight in the way that this meeting went. This get together has also been the last moment that the women were seen. Therefore, all women that were present at the meeting were given a sunflower with personal note, to thank them for their contribution.

After the data was prepared for analysis, it was coded using Atlas.ti. The documents were coded in the five sub themes of female entrepreneurship, competences, material, meaning and embeddedness (referring to the context of Mexico City). The codebook is attached in [attachment 3](#). After the interviews were coded for a first time, a second round of coding was started. In this round, the codes that were similar were put together, or new codes were created. Coding has been used to categorize and group the data that shared the same characteristics, for example the code 'always wanted to open a restaurant', has been categorized as a reason to start the business, and therefore is categorized as 'meaning'. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) qualitative analysis in its purest form is always led by an approach that is inductive; meaning that the themes and categories arise from the data, rather than the other way around. However, Bruce (2007), Harper (2003) and Mauthner (2003) argue that patterns and categories do not emerge on their own, but are interpretations of the data according to the framework that is used in the research. Therefore, the process of coding is highly reflexive and is led by subjective perspectives and understandings (Bruce, 2007; Harper, 2003; Mauthner, 2003). This reflexive process has been the foundation of the data analysis of the interviews in this study too, as the transcripts have been coded by groups that were derived from the theoretical framework that this research is based on - the practice theory framework of Shove et al. (2012).

After this reflexive coding process, the codes and code groups have been analysed by exploring which codes were used most often, and what quotations were part of the code groups meaning, competences and material; building the foundation for describing what factors influence the practices of the ROs.

### 3.3 Positionality and limitations

With regards to the participants in this research, there were some limitations regarding my position to the restaurant owners. First of all, I was a Dutch student in Mexico City, doing an internship at a Mexican office. During my internship, I was in charge of a program, which name will not be shared to maintain anonymity. In this research paper, the program will be referred to as: the program. Roles related to the program, included the organisation of a get together with all winners at the office at the start of the program in September, visiting all of the restaurant owners and their businesses and communicating important dates for the program with them. I knew my position as an intern and foreigner in Mexico City, but the ROs might have not been aware of my position at first, maybe even confusing me with my internship supervisor, as we share the same name. Furthermore, during the first reunion with all ROs in September, I was presented to be the leader of the project. Therefore, the ROs might have felt a certain distinction from me. When approaching the women for this research on their practices, I clearly stated that the interview is not related to the project, and that it is part of my master thesis research.

After arriving in Mexico City in September, all interviews have purposely been held a few months later in the second half of November and the first week of December. The months September, October and half of November have been crucial in getting to know the context of Mexico City and getting used to the language. With regards to my position as a Dutch person in Mexico City, data collection might have been affected. Over the years I have been learning Spanish, so I felt positive doing the interviews in the native language of the ROs. This gave them the opportunity to fully express themselves. However, the ROs might have adjusted their language use to my level, or avoided certain topics. At the same time, not being from the city and country has had positive impacts too. By living in the city for some time, I was aware of the context of the women. Meanwhile, I could also ask a lot of questions about their field of work and Mexican culture, as I did not have any experience in their specific field. Therefore, the ROs explained a lot to me about the context and their days, giving me a detailed insight in their daily practices. Since the questions dived into topics that are related to gender, me being a woman probably was beneficial for the research.

With regards to the interview locations, seven of the eight interviews were held at the RB of the RO, in their personal environment. The ROs could decide on the location of the interview, doing it either at the location of their business (what seven of the eight decided) or at an external location. One RO decided that she wanted to do the interview in another café, as she preferred to have privacy during the interview. Interviews give the opportunity to ask about personal experiences and opinions of all of the ROs, as the interviews are conducted in person. In this study the choice for qualitative methods has resulted in a detailed understanding of the factors that influence ROs. However, the choice for this personal approach does have the consequence that some questions are avoided. In this study I did not ask about the income of the RO for example, as I did not feel comfortable asking about the financial situation of the RO. Questionnaires or other

anonymous research methods could have given the opportunity to ask more personal and perhaps uncomfortable questions to the ROs, but in this research to practices specifically, interviews are still considered to be the most suitable research method.

All of the respondents being participants of the program, this has resulted in a limited research sample. As seen in figure 3.1, the research location of this research is very specific in CDMX, and the research sample is a selection that is narrowed down by the selection procedure of the organisations American Express and Fundación Placemaking México. In order to participate in this program, restaurants had to go through an application process, after which they were selected by Fundación Placemaking México and American Express. Out of all RBs in Mexico City, 70 small independent RBs applied, of which a significant amount did not deliver a complete application. The fact that only 70 out of thousands RBs in the city applied, shows that the program might not be as accessible as has been thought; even though all of the eight ROs stated that the program was *'very accessible'* (all ROs) and *'super easy'* (Carmen) to apply to. By applying to a program such as this one, these entrepreneurs already show their ambition and trust in their project. Being selected by the program makes this sample of women entrepreneurs a selected sample. The program was aimed at small independent restaurants that were led by members of *'underrepresented and/or economically vulnerable groups'* (IDA, 2023). Therefore, the research sample is a direct effect of the selection procedure of this. However, this decision has been made by American Express and Fundación Placemaking México, and was not made by the researcher. Having researched this particular sample of female ROs in Mexico City therefore gives a detailed insight in the practices of these eight female entrepreneurs, but is not representative for all female ROs in Mexico City. Apart from this 'practical' limitations concerning data collection and the fieldwork, one important notion that should be made is my researcher bias as a woman. In section 5.2 this researcher bias will be discussed more elaborately.

### 3.4 Research location

Referring to Reygadas in the introduction of this research paper, she shares to be *'a cook in the middle of the world's largest, most complex and most diverse metropolis, which has an incredible richness in its culture and gastronomy'* (Reygadas, as cited in Sgarbi, 2023).

The whole metropolitan area of Mexico City is home to more than 22 and a half million inhabitants, being the second largest metropolitan area of Latin America in 2024 (Statista, 2024). The City of Mexico City (without the surrounding districts) has a number of 9.2 million inhabitants, and housed a bit more than 57 thousand restaurants and similar establishments in June 2023. *'Similar establishments'* include cafeterias, snack bars, and take away places (Statista, 2023). According to the Association of Mexican Restaurants, women made up fifty five percent of the workforce in the Mexican restaurant industry in 2019. Eighty percent of these women are single mothers (Asociación Mexicana de Restaurantes, 2019). There are no numbers available of how many of these women are the owners of a restaurant. Through the website OpenTable it is possible to search for restaurants which are led by women in Mexico City, but only thirteen restaurants are shown. The webpage was launched in 2019, *"just in time for International Women's Day"* (OpenTable, n.d.). Moreover, the blog Wanderlog regularly updates a page with the best forty women-led restaurants in Mexico City – according to their staff (Wanderlog, 2023).

These initiatives make it easier for people to find a restaurant in the city that is owned by a woman. It can be perceived that society is aware of the underrepresented position of women in the restaurant industry, and therefore wants to support them. This research to the practices of female restaurant owners will contribute to the understanding of this underrepresented position of women leading restaurants.

In figure 3.1 a map of Mexico City (or CDMX) is portrayed, showing the borders of the city area with the red dotted lines. The ROs that have participated in this research all had their businesses in the neighbourhoods that are located within the green triangle. Those neighbourhoods are the 'colonias' (districts) of Cuauhtémoc and Nápoles. In particular Cuauhtémoc, in which the smaller districts Condesa and Roma Norte are located, are considered to be trendy neighbourhoods where many tourists stay during their visit to CDMX. In those neighbourhoods many restaurants, bars and nightlife venues are housed, and due to a high influx of American expats ('gringos') the neighbourhoods are highly gentrified (Aguilar-Vélazquez, 2024). Section 4.6 elaborates on the context of Mexico City more elaborately.



Figure 3.2: Location of participating restaurants (Google Maps, 2024)

Before the results of the empirical fieldwork of this research will be discussed, an overview of the most important highlights of the methods will be given. The women that are central in this research have participated in a program of Fundación Placemaking México, through which the researcher has approached them. The common factor between the women is that they all have won 7500 US dollar as a result of the program, which they can use for their RBs in Mexico City. An overview of the characteristics of the women and their businesses is included in table 3.1. In terms of data collection, multiple visits to the RBs have been done, which were part of the program. Furthermore, all eight women have been interviewed about their businesses and daily practices. Those interviews were semi-conducted, and took place at their restaurants – except for one. Furthermore, a meeting has been organized after those eight interviews were conducted. In this meeting, the women were brought together in order to get to know each other and share experiences.

In the next chapter, chapter 4, the most important findings of these interviews, observations and meeting are analysed. In order to introduce every theme, vignettes of certain situations are included. Vignettes are short pieces of writing, in which the typical characteristics of something are highlighted (Sampson et al., 2019). In this research the vignettes portray for example parts of conversations with the ROs, or describe an observation that has been done at one of the restaurant businesses. They are used with the aim to give an insight in the context in which this fieldwork is located.

## 4. Results

After three months of observing restaurant practices and talking to female ROs, all findings will be discussed in this chapter following the design of *zooming in* and *zooming out*. Every section of this chapter will be introduced by small vignettes.

The very first vignette describes daily routines of ROs, introducing section 4.1 on restaurant practices. After this section, the practices of the ROs are being analysed by and categorised over the three elements of Shove: meaning (section 4.2), materiality (section 4.3) and competences (section 4.4). These sections are introduced by vignettes that highlight the way in which every single one of these three elements is crucial in the building up of practices. After all related practices of the female ROs are clear, these practices will be put in relation to each other in the section 4.5: *zooming in*. In this section it will be made clear how different practices are linked to each other and are in constant change, referring to figure 2.2. Lastly, the daily work of the female ROs will be put in relation to the context of Mexico City in section 4.6: *zooming out*.

*'Mañana no hay luz, en todo el día.'* We are halfway through the interview when Carmen gives me her phone, showing me an e-mail of the municipality of Mexico City. We just discussed her regular day and Carmen told me that every day is different. Or rather she told me, *"I don't really have a normal day. Every day is so fucking different. The word 'fucking' you need to put really clear, you know."* I reassure her that I will. *"One day is all okay. We are happy and we are all okay. Cool. And the other day you receive things like that."* The email informs Carmen that the whole street will not have any electricity that next day. There will not be electricity, any light, nor any water.

*"How can I solve this? I cannot sell? And that is not the worst. The worst is the food. What is going to happen with the food, because the refrigerator won't work. My day is.. solving a lot of problems. That is my normal day. I have to solve like 10 problems. ... and being like, is the customer okay, are the suppliers okay, paying the rent, all the things."*

I ask her what she likes best about managing her restaurant.

Carmen: *\*Joking\** *"That I can order coffee. No, talking with the personal and all the days I could..."* An employee approaches Carmen to ask her about work tomorrow. During the interview, this situation occurs multiple times more. The news of not having to work the day after spreads gradually throughout the team. The interview ends at around 7pm, when the shifts of some employees have ended as well. They join my conversation with Carmen and as there won't be any work tomorrow - plans for going out are made. Being at the restaurant for the afternoon has shown me a little insight of her daily practices as the owner of Restaurante Los Raíces, but to quote Carmen: *'Every day is fucking different.'*

## 4.1. Daily routines

Building upon Giddens' (1984) notion that routinized practices give an insight in understanding everyday actions of individuals and how this is reproduced, it has been chosen to start the results chapter with a discussion of routinized acts of female ROs. In this first section it is aspired to give an answer to the question: *What are daily routines of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?*

When discussing the daily practices and routines of the ROs, it came to light that almost every RO had a different set up of their daily agenda. Lorena explained that she has a fixed routine for example, where she arrives at work every morning to have a coffee, and takes care of similar work practices every day, including welcoming guests, preparing food and serving dishes. These practices are all in line with the practices that were described in the research by Wellton et al. (2016) that is discussed in section 2.2. Also for Elena and Gloria this is the case. Elena: *'So regular workday, I would say. I come in at 11. I help out with a little bit of preparation. I taste everything. I check what's going on in the kitchen. We have a briefing at 1:30pm. And we start service at 2pm.'*

Raquel rotates certain shifts with her two business partners, while María told in the interview that her regular days depend on whether she needs to buy products or not. Her crucial role in this practice was embodied during the reunion with all women ROs at Café Coyo. María was called multiple times during the meeting by her colleague who was doing the groceries at the market at that moment, as María was at the meeting. *'He is at the market now'*, she said, *'normally I take care of this.'*

Other than practices such as managing a team and hospitality, six of the eight women included administrative tasks in their daily practices. All of the participants mentioned that the restaurant is registered on their names. Elisa said that she and her brother decided to do this on purpose, as they thought *'there were going to be tons of grants for women.'* With Café Naranja being under her name, Elisa explains that her role includes that she has to take care of all taxes, accounting, financial and *'legal stuff'*, with contracts of employees having to be signed by her. When discussing grants for women specifically, all of the women agreed there were no grants available, thinking there would have been. The unavailability of grants is related to the context in which the RBs are positioned, and will be discussed more elaborately in section 4.6.

Practices of food preparation, or *'mise-en-place'* in restaurant terminology, are routinized acts. This is in line with Giddens (1984), stating that social life is built up by routinized behaviours, that offer stability and predictability. Lorena, Elena, Gloria, María and Raquel explained that they did have a certain stable routine in their days. However, the regular day of the other three women ROs was considered to be the opposite of predictable.

Elisa, Carmen and Rita have described their regular day to be *'chaotic'*. Rita even called her days to be a *'desmadre'* (madness). Rita: *"When something is super chaotic, super crazy, it's like... Es un desmadre."* Later, she describes that *"in these chaotic days or weeks"* she does have to pay her taxes and rent, or needs to be present at the bakery to receive suppliers. Therefore, also for her there are some routinized practices in this chaos. Furthermore, Rita explained that she can have a personal schedule, as she can depend on her people that work for her. However, later she shared that she is often needed at the bakery as a back-up when something has happened to someone of her team. As a consequence, she is present at the bakery almost every day that they are opened.

By describing that she needs to be present at the bakery, even just for back-up, Rita expresses a feeling of commitment to the business. This feeling of commitment to the business is shared with

all of the eight participants, and everyone explained to be at their business almost every day that the business is open. Important in this is the extent to which tasks are delegated to the team. In terms of operation, half of the respondents explained that they delegated tasks to their team in order to *'make the business independent'* (Elisa) and *'build the restaurant functional without us'* (Elena). In Elena's case, her regular days changed radically since the restaurant has grown over the years. At the start she used to be the only chef, changing menus every day, whereas now they have a big team that takes care of these cooking practices, and her role changed into being a manager. This equals the experience of Elisa, who portrayed the beginning of the business to be *'just me and my brother [and business partner] the entire day, coming in, sweeping the floor, getting the furniture out, preparing food, and then cleaning up in the end and stuff. And that went on for like three months or something.'*

Over the years, delegating tasks has been an important part of being able to take a step back for Elisa, and where Rita explains to be present at the bakery to receive suppliers, Elisa told that she is now learning employee Chloé to take up this practice bundle of food supply. As portrayed by her, product delivery entails an extended process of making an inventory, placing the order, receiving it, comparing the order that you received with the order that you have placed and if you pay the right amount, and then doing the payment. Delegating tasks helps her not to be needed at the café every day, as the lack of an established routine *'takes its toll'* (Elisa).

Closing off this first exploration of daily routines, an answer to the question that is central in this section; *What are daily routines of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?* Will be formulated. It can be concluded that daily routines of women restaurant owners (ROs) in Mexico City vary significantly, reflecting a spectrum from highly structured to chaotic. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to managing a restaurant. The diversity in daily routines reflects different management styles, business stages, and personal preferences. As portrayed in the vignette and as discussed by Rita, flexibility and adaptability are crucial for handling the unpredictable nature of running a restaurant. However, Lorena, Elena, and Gloria, maintain consistent daily routines that involve a set sequence of tasks. These routines provide stability and predictability, aligning with Giddens' (1984) notion that social life is built on routinized behaviours. Tasks such as welcoming guests, preparing food, and serving dishes are common among these ROs, indicating a structured approach to managing their establishments. Other ROs, like Elisa, Carmen, and Rita, describe their days as chaotic or unpredictable. Despite this, they still engage in some routinized practices, such as handling administrative tasks and managing supplier deliveries.

Now the daily routines – or in some cases, the lack of those – have been discussed, the practices of female ROs will be analysed by the three elements of Shove et al. (2012), meaning, material and competences. Firstly, the role of meaning will be studied. This will be introduced by a vignette on the social bakery La Adelita, with Gloria as the owner.

The sign outside reads the activities that are programmed for November 2023, and when entering the bakery, the eye is drawn to a wonderful mural on the back wall of the space. The mural portrays four women making bread, next to a girl that is eating a concha, a typical Mexican sweet bread. 'Vivas y libres' reads the mural, which stands for being alive and free. Underneath the painting, a purple flag is put on the wall, showing the protest 'Ni una menos', meaning 'Not one more less'. Without doubt this flag has been taken to the Women's March in Mexico City, which is held on International Women's Day every 8th of March. We are inside Panadaría La Adelita, a feminist social bakery with a small seating area at the entrance. Going upstairs, various therapy rooms and group session spaces are created. This bakery started as a space for women to connect and share experiences, by offering workshops to train women making artisanal bread, while having group therapy sessions at the moments that the bread is in the oven. La Adelita aims to generate networks within women and empower them with attention to gender violence, contributing to their vision of a world that is just and violence-free for women. The bakery organizes events with other feminist organisations, and offers workshops as self-defence and concerts at the establishment. Their vision is embedded in every communal activity that is organized, every therapy session that is given, and every piece of bread that is made at this bakery.



Figure 4.1: the mural in bakery La Adelita (author)

## 4.2 Meaning

*What are drivers for female ROs in Mexico City to run their business?*

Building upon Shove's practice theory framework as discussed in section 2.1, 'meanings' are the 'symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations' (Shove et al., 2012, p. 14) of a practice. In this section, the contribution of the element 'meaning' will be discussed, including the motivations of the RO to start their business (also included in table 3.1) and their main objectives in their work.

### 4.2.1 Starting the business

For seven of the eight women, serving food was the main ideal when starting their business. Only for Gloria, owner of the bakery that is described in the vignette, the business grew out of a social project. Out of the eight RBs, three of those businesses serve food that is other than Mexican cuisine. For them, serving these foreign specialties in Mexico City was the main reason to start the business. For Elisa, starting the café grew out of wanting to create impact during the pandemic. Also for Rita the pandemic was a main driver to start her business, giving her the opportunity to rethink her career. This is something she shares with half of the ROs, as more women stated that the pandemic created an opportunity for them to start a new job. As seen in table 3.1, half of the business is set up in 2020 or later; the year that the covid pandemic started.

For María, serving the cuisine of her husband's country was the main reason to enter the RI. Furthermore, she and her husband and business partner Paulo wanted to *"be the bosses that we never found, to achieve a workspace that is friendly, that is where we have a good time and the good things that we had, because we also had very good things to apply them and what we always wanted to carry out. That was kind of our goal."*

Opening a restaurant was not an initial dream for six of the eight participants. The two participants who have an education that is related to opening a restaurant, are also the only two for whom it was a dream to open a restaurant. For the other six participants, opening a restaurant was not on the cards and began out of a joke, or they joined their business partner in their plan.

For Elena, having her own business is something she has wanted since she was doing her education becoming a chef: *"When you're a chef and you love small restaurants, you can't work for someone your whole life. You really need to kind of see where you are at the end of this, at the end of the road. Because it's hard to live as a chef your whole life, or you can. I never liked being part. I never really liked big restaurant groups or big organisations like hotels. So I always thought of small restaurants. It was, like, the most romantic thing that I thought. And it was like, okay, well, I can live off having a restaurant. I don't need more than that."*

### 4.2.2 Being a boss

When asking what the women were most proud of regarding their job, half of the ROs told that they were proud to have a business that can sustain people, or see this as an objective to start their business. Carmen mentions that it is important for her to have a restaurant that employs people. She added that she wants to create a working environment that is safe and just, as she has experience in restaurants where she has been treated badly. This relates to the embeddedness of the restaurant in the RI. Carmen: *"For girls, I think it's incredible, but it's not a friendly way, a friendly place to a girl, you know? And that's why I always wanted to have a difference here in Los Raices. So if you came to the restaurant as an employee, you can know that the things are going to*

*be different, you know?"* Lorena and María agree and both said they want a space that is *'just'* for their employees.

This value of being just towards their employees in line with research by Wellton et al. (2016), that concluded that RO leadership approach was mostly intuitive and consisted of nice and fair towards their team.

Other than being proud to be able to employ people and treating people right, Elena and Lorena also stressed that they are proud to be an entrepreneur specifically. Those ROs therefore use their business as a tool to practise their norms and values as a just entrepreneur. Furthermore, earlier research on female entrepreneurs has stated collaborative and nurturing to be typical characteristics of female entrepreneurs (Yoder, 2001). The values of the RBs in this research complement this earlier research on women entrepreneurs.

For Raquel, having a restaurant is a great achievement, *'and a very big sacrifice too, because it's not difficult for me to cook, it's not difficult for me to socialise or good not to socialise but to serve people, I don't find that difficult, it seems like time to me, it's very absorbing. Aha, it sucks you in all the time. And you've got to be cooking and you've got to be serving. (...) But I'm extremely proud.'*

For Rita, being her own boss was a big aspiration when starting the bakery. She did not feel at place at her job and wanted to do something else. One key factor for this was the fact that she did not want to work for anybody else, because she knew that wanting to be in a better position meant that there are going to be *'more men around'*. According to Rita, *'most of the men, I don't want to generalise, but I think they feel frightening or I don't know what they feel that they start to put obstacles for us.'* Rita explained that she is quite direct, an approach that her male colleagues were not used to. They held her back, saying that she needed to back down. She decided this was something she did not want to do, and decided to join her brother in the bakery. Rita: *"I want to be the owner of my time. And if I want to fight, I want to do it for something that is going to be for myself. If I'm not going to sleep, if I'm going to be frustrated, if I'm going to stop doing some exercise, it's going to be for something that is worth it not to work for others."*

Later, Rita explained that she accepts that this particular job was not *'on my bucket list when I was a girl.'* However, she knew that she could help people with this job. *"So that's the main reason that I say yes. And right now is what I most enjoy, to connect with clients, connect with employees. And yeah, of course I enjoy pastries and all that stuff, but yeah, I enjoy to connect."* This notion of enjoying hospitality is in line with dreams and life-style in the research by Wellton et al. (2016), entailing the meaning of connecting to people. At the same time, it is not the restaurant itself that is the goal for Rita, but it is a tool for connecting to others.

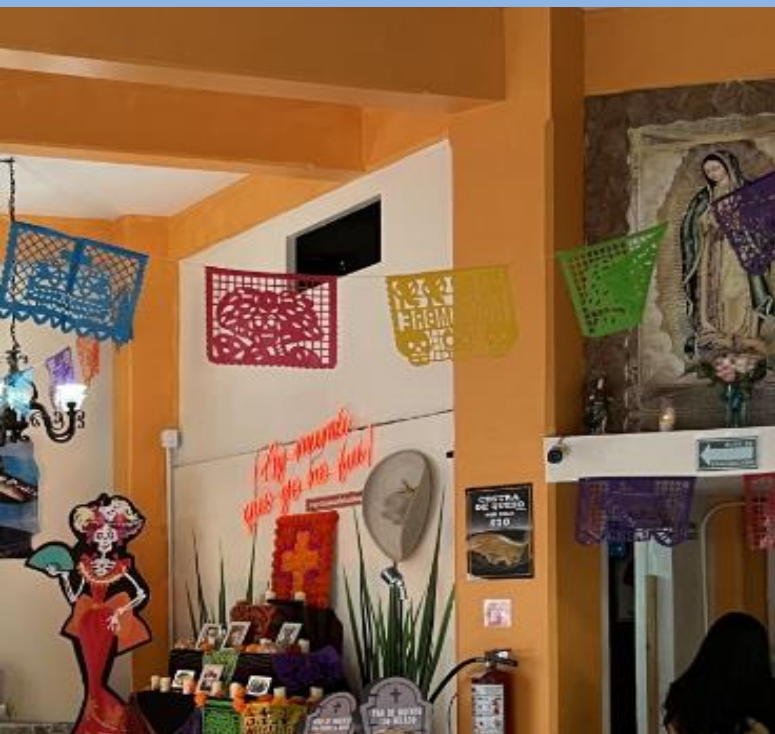
Furthermore, ROs make all decisions and mediate any conflicts that arise immediately (Wellton et al., 2016), which is aligned with Lorena who explained that she insists her team to solve problems within working hours, but does not actively involves herself in the situation: *'if it is a problem between X and Y, and I am Z, what do I have to do in that equation, right? So I do propose that within their working hours they sit down, talk about it and solve it.'* Later she mentioned that *'to go and see and see that they are getting along well, and that they are bonding'*, are the key to her *'happy moments'* – a feeling about leadership that she shares with Rita.

To summarise the role of meaning and give an answer to the question that was central in this section: *What are drivers for female restaurant owners to run their businesses?* it can be stated that drivers for female ROs in Mexico City to run their businesses are multifaceted, encompassing a passion for food, the desire for independence, and the aspiration to create fair and supportive work environments. Their objectives are similarly diverse, focusing on creating employment, practicing just leadership, achieving personal fulfilment and making an impact. These

motivations and values not only drive their businesses but also shape their workplace cultures and leadership styles. Female ROs having an intuitive and fair leadership approach is in line with research by Bullough et al. (2021), and the joy of working in a RB as a motivation aligns with research by Wellton et al. (2016).

In the next section, section 4.3, the role of material will be discussed. This section is introduced by a vignette on Restaurante Los Cachuchas, a RB that is unique in its' creative approach to music and art in the restaurant.

Figure 4.2: interior of Restaurante de los Cachuchas, with the altar for Día de los Muertos to the left (author)



It was the end of October 2023 when I first entered Restaurante de los Cachuchas. The restaurant is located on the corner of the street, welcoming guests inside through enormous open garage doors, a construction that lots of restaurants in Mexico City have. This design causes outdoor walls to practically be non-existent and allow passers to look into the restaurant. The open doors lead me into a big open space, which is home to a kitchen, about fifteen tables, a stage with microphone for performances and karaoke and - as it is close to Día de los Muertos - an altar presenting artists who are no longer with us. Another altar is located above the door. Raquel: *'We are all Catholics, and it is tradition here in Mexico to always have an altar for protection. So when we were looking for a space and we saw the altar, we knew this was it.'* When we sit down for the interview, I see that the tables are all covered with symbols. They consist of drawings of under more tacos, guitars, fruit and a crown. Later, Raquel explained to me that these tables contain drawings for the Mexican game *'lotería'*, which they play every Saturday at Los Cachuchas. The stage is open to everyone, creating a space for art, performance and music. The kitchen is open to see for the guests and toppings for tacos, such as salsas, onion and coriander are located on the counter for guests to serve themselves. Music from the famous Disney film *Coco* is played and the walls are full with portraits of Mexican singers and actors and a board to play darts, surrounded by little holes of missed shots. Raquel tells me that people play the game while waiting for their food, or after their dessert and coffee; *"and well, it's also a little de-stress in their lunch break or something like that."* Even though it was a quiet Friday morning in the restaurant, I felt the atmosphere of the restaurant, and how it would be on a crowded Saturday afternoon, playing *lotería*, singing karaoke and watching performances while eating traditional Mexican dishes.

## 4.3 Material

*What do female restaurant owners in Mexico City need to run their business in terms of materiality?*

According to Shove et al. (2012), materials are the '*things, technologies, tangible physical entities, and the stuff of which objects are made*', contributing to the practices of ROs.

For the ROs, the establishment and products that are used to prepare dishes are of the biggest importance to their daily practices. Furthermore, furniture and physical entities in the restaurant, such as the attributes that are present in Las Cachuchas, are essential in the practices of ROs. At the same time, this builds upon the notion of ontological autonomy, as discussed in section 2.2 (Sandberg & Tshoukas, 2019; de Haan, 2024), stating that objects or practices *only* have an essence in their relational form and performances in the context of practice. For example, the game table only makes sense if you know the game 'lotería' and people are playing it, and the table itself only has an essence as dining space when people put plates on the object. Without actors who play the game or practioners who put plates and cups on the table, the object does not have an essence.

This section on material discusses which practices are related to renovation and decoration and how materiality intertwines with meaning and competences, forming these practices. According to Wellton et al. (2016), practices such as renovations and decorations are part of dreams and life-style. As the physical establishment has been a big topic during the interviews and all ROs received a grant to do physical adjustments to their RB, it has been chosen to put renovations and decorations as a bigger sub section in the total section of materiality under the name 'design of the establishment'. Not all RBs had an outside terrace, but those spaces have been included in the discussion of the design of the establishment too. Therefore, the establishment of the RB can be as the physical inside and outside space of the business.

### 4.3.1 Design of the establishment

When discussing the establishment in which the businesses of the restaurant holders are located, multiple common experiences and factors came to light. First of all, the respondents all proclaimed they needed space for their business. Lorena and her partner started their business in a food truck, after which they transferred to a permanent establishment, and later even expanded to having two businesses and a separate space for storage. Gloria and Rita started their businesses at home, after which they started searching for an establishment. The other five respondents mentioned that they searched for an establishment first, after which they started to set up the business from that location. In terms of finding the establishment, five ROs found it through the internet, while two of the ROs expressed they saw it walking down the street.

Referring to the vignette on Los Cachuchas, the presence of the altar convinced Raquel and her business partners that the space that they liked was the one. This relates to the embeddedness of culture and beliefs in the choices that are made (Schein, 1992).

Lorena and her husband got to hire the establishment in which Café Coyo is located as they had a good relationship with the person that rents the establishment to them. Three of the eight respondents have got multiple locations, or are making plans to open another location to expand their business. All of the respondents mentioned that they had to remodel the establishment to transform it into a space that fits their business, all calling this process of renovation an 'exciting' and busy time. This is in line with the renovations and remodelling that has been discussed in

Wellton et al. (2016). Equally corresponding was that two of the eight ROs expressed their love for the location of the RB in Mexico City.

For Elena, opening the restaurant includes lots of practice. She explained that the process of opening La Charola *“was nice because Luis [business partner and husband] has experience with opening many restaurants. So kind of like, in terms of working from the ground up, in terms of layouts, working with architects, working with materials, working with kitchen equipment suppliers, working with electricity, working with water, kind of like all these installations.” (...)* *“Luis designed where the bar was, the kitchen table, private room, kind of like how it all works. And he loves it. I think what you have to understand as a chef, you can't only love to cook all the time, because then you don't grow. So I would say Luis spends less time in the kitchen, but he's all about sourcing new equipment. Like, oh, we need a new tap. We're going to get a draft, the coffee machine. So he's very much involved with that part of the operation.”*

During the interviews, three of the eight respondents talked about opening another location for their business, or have already opened another location. According to María, this is needed to maintain a healthy business: *“It is necessary to open another location, because you don't know what will happen to this restaurant. Your source of work for many people could decline. You must have another location to be able to be more stable and more relaxed. And then many things can happen.”* Thinking of opening new locations in order to maintain a healthy business is a sign of future orientation and uncertainty avoidance, which have been included in the framework of Bullough et al. (2021).

#### 4.3.2 Equipment and products

Equipment influences the practices of the participants in different ways. Lorena makes sure that her employees have machinery to help them with certain tasks. This is similar to María, who will buy new kitchen equipment after winning the grant. Other than equipment for staff and food preparation, equipment is also affecting the practices of restaurant customers. As described in the vignette, Restaurante de los Cachuchas has tables that are covered with a game, so that activities can take place in the restaurant. Elisa described how she wants to use the grant for new furniture, as the chairs are wobbly and uncomfortable. The same applies to Lorena and Raquel, who stated that new furniture was the first thing they bought with the grant.

In terms of preparing dishes, all of the respondents mentioned obtaining their products from Mercado Central de Abastos, the main wholesale market of Mexico City. Some participants go to the market themselves, whereas others work with a buyer who does the shopping for them. Gloria explained that they also have suppliers who donate products to them, whereas Lorena serves the orange juice that they buy from a local street vendor to support the local economy.

Lorena: *“We both like to support local businesses, our providers, for example, we know that they go and buy local and things like that. Our ex provider also, they have their own farm and they bring it. It's organic and so on. So we try also to support local and small, our juice provider. We don't make it ourselves, our own juice, even though it's something really simple like a juice, we rather choose to buy it from the local 'jugero' (juice seller).”*

Other than retrieving products, participants also mentioned being particularly proud of the food they serve. For example, María explains that it is very hard to make Italian pizzas in Mexico, *“because of many factors. The altitude, the climate, the ingredients. And he [Paulo] knew how to make pizza there, but the recipe is very different. Very different. The only thing that's similar is the pizza. But the whole recipe is completely different. So you need a lot of knowledge to be able to do it*

*and a lot of testing. So it took about two months to make, change, change, change, change, so that he already knew the flour well and there was stability in the dough.*” In this practice of making pizza, multiple element relations are established. Material is hard to find in the context of Mexico City and skills are needed to prepare the pizza. María and Paulo started their pizzeria with the idea to sell Italian pizza of high quality in Mexico City, being the meaning of the practice. Later in the interview María told that she could not find a female pizza maker, but she would love to hire a woman that can make pizzas, showing that gender is rooted in this practice too.

In the cases of Elisa and Gloria, the products are closely related to the values of their RBs. Elisa and her brother have been developing their business over the years, and felt like their contemporary business did not fulfil their visions anymore. They have gone back to the core, and changed their plan. They see food as nutrition, and want their food to be as nutrition dense as possible. Therefore, they have been taking action to change suppliers, in order to achieve their values of sustainability and nutrition. In La Adelita, bread is made during therapy, which is the origin of the social bakery. Women are in therapy while making bread together, developed from the goal of creating community between women. The bakery sells the bread that is made during these therapy sessions, developing the meaning of the product.

Lastly, digital devices are needed to be able to do marketing practices. All of the ROs mentioned that digital communication was part of daily practices as well, leading them to sit down with a laptop or smartphone to take care of this. In section 4.5.1, the role of social media and the interrelation of practices will be explored further.

As a response to the question that was central in this section: *What do female restaurant owners in Mexico City need to run their business in terms of materiality?* Multiple entities are brought to light. First of all, the physical establishment is needed, being shaped by competences and meaning of the ROs and their business partners. For food preparation, machinery and kitchen equipment are vital; even as the products that are used. All ROs get their products from Mercado Central de Abastos. The quality of the products is highly valued; underlined by the sustainability vision of Elisa and aim for specific products by María. ROs value a space that is enjoyable for guests, leading them to invest in comfortable furniture and playing music.

The following section, section 4.4, builds upon the role of competences that ROs use in their daily practices of running a RB. This section is introduced by a vignette on Café Naranja, which is owned by Elisa.



## 4.4 Competences

*What competences do female restaurant owners in Mexico City use to run their business?*

The competences that are needed for a practice, encompass *'skills, know-how and technique'* (Shove et al., 2012), and are discussed in this section. In this research, the know-how and skills of the employees (or team) are also put under competences.

In terms of education, six of the eight participants said that they did not have any education related to managing a restaurant. Two of these participants did have experience in the industry, as they had worked as a waitress. One participant has the basis of being a chef and the eighth participant has a career in restaurant management.

While starting the restaurant, the business partner played a big role in the know-how of the restaurant practices.

Elena and Lorena said that their husbands are experienced in opening restaurants, Elena explained that her husband Luis for example took care of everything *'in terms of working from the ground up, in terms of layouts, working with architects, working with materials, working with kitchen equipment suppliers, working with electricity, working with water, kind of like all these installations.'* This is a clear representation of how materiality is a big element in opening a restaurant, while knowledge about doing so is crucial too. Meaning is embedded in the way that a restaurant is opened with a certain idea in mind.

Three of the eight participants mentioned that they did do a course related to managing a restaurant or kitchen hygienics, increasing their knowledge of the industry. Linked to the embeddedness of the restaurant in the RI, Rita mentioned that she feels like suppliers can mislead her when she does not have knowledge about the industry. This feeling is in line with findings by Mitra & Basit (2019), who argue that business relations are influenced by mistrust. Rita battles this feeling by taking efforts to learn about the industry in order to *'talk the language'* of the suppliers.

### 4.4.1 Business partners and employees

Striking in this research is that three of the eight businesses are led by a woman with her brother. In these three cases, but also in four other restaurants, family plays an important part in the business. Socially, but for Carmen and Lorena also in an economic perspective. Carmen started the business herself, but has included her uncle and a friend of her uncle as business partners in order to survive the pandemic. Lorena explained that they were able to obtain a loan from the family of her husband, making it possible to open *Restaurante Coyo*. This notion of family embeddedness is in line with research on Mexican market women by Seligmann (2002).

Raquel opened *Restaurante de los Cachuchas* with her brother and a friend. Her mom takes care of the administration and is important to the project. She explains that the parents *'have been a great support for us to move forward in the projects we are creating. They tell us: go ahead, we'll support you in whatever you need and if you think you're going to do well in this, do it well, and we're there for you. That's why Roberto's parents also support us.'* Roberto's parents are not from Mexico City, but always come to the restaurant when help is needed. She explains the restaurant to be a *'family business'*, which is an important factor for her. Valuing the embeddedness of her family (meaning) therefore is included in the complex of running a restaurant too.

Other than being involved in the practices of the restaurant right now, two ROs explained that their family has played a role in them choosing this career in the RB. For Carmen, her grandma has been a huge factor for her to open the restaurant in order to share recipes. Another RO explained that her parents were in business too, so she has been brought up in an *'entrepreneurial environment'*, this could have influenced her subconsciously. Role models are said to play an important role in daughters to start their own business (Ferriman et al., 2009).

Seven of the eight participants have a business partner, who they value very much. Carmen is the only participant who started her restaurant on her own, and sees her two business partners as a need for the money. However, she prefers to manage the restaurant on her own. *"They definitely trust me. Because they wouldn't have given me their money. But... (...) I mean, unfortunately, being men, there's... How can I put it? There is... A certain amount of doubt. (...) When we are good, we are a team. When we are not good, you are the problem of the restaurant. So I'm happy having business. Yeah. Business partners. Partners, no. But if los Raíces survived in pandemic, it's because of that [their economic support]."*

Rita could not imagine starting the business without her brother and business partner Diego, addressing her luck to be able to have a bakery with her brother. *"So I know that there are women that do all this stuff just by themselves. I'm lucky that I have this type of brother,"* as her brother Diego helped her in deciding to make her change in career to the bakery. Even though she is very happy she is doing business together with her brother, she also mentions that is part of trust in herself, Rita:

*"It's like you don't have to do it alone and do it with someone. Even if it's a man or a woman. It doesn't mean that you are less. Because sometimes as a woman, I think that we need to prove that we are worth it. So that means that I have to do it just by myself. Because that's the only way that people are going to show my greatness. So it's like, if you are in this, try not to do it just by yourself. And it doesn't mean that you need an official partner. Maybe you need your supportive team. And I'm grateful that I have. Okay, he's my partner, but he's also my brother, so a lot of things wouldn't happen without him. It's like my personal life. Do it with someone, can give you support and can give you this push."* This is in line with in-group collectivism, which is part of the framework that is embedded in figure 2.1 (Bullough et al., 2021).

Also, when comparing this experience of Rita to Carmen's, who is managing her business alone, Rita's perception of women needing to prove themselves is in line. However, it is unclear if Rita means that women feel the need to show their worth to others, or to themselves. For Carmen, proving herself is important. At the end of the interview, Carmen mentioned that she loves being a woman and showing what she is worth. Stating that *"I love being able to show that it can be done, even in spite of everything. I love being able to prove to myself that I'm capable of anything I want, you know? I think that's something that all women should have in their heads. That if you want it, you're going to get it, you know? I mean, I think that's an experience that I would always like to share. Because sometimes we see our dreams as just dreams. You are objective, like dreams. If you start to it as a reality, it can happen, you know. Go, go! Don't hesitate! Never hesitate! Something that works for me is, I want it, I'm going for it. It's mine, you know?"*

For Carmen to feel the need to show her worth as a woman specifically, shows how gender is deeply rooted in society's practices (Brush et al., 2018). Added up, this quote by Carmen shows how assertiveness is one of her personal traits, being in line with the framework by Bullough et al. (2021), as she states that *'I want it, I'm going for it.'*

For three of the ROs, family of themselves, or of their business partner, is not from Mexico. With these family members being abroad, the role of family played a smaller role than the family

network of the other ROs. However, their family being from a particular country did play a big role in starting the restaurant, wanting to bring the cuisine of a particular country to Mexico City. This is portrayed in table 3.1.

Regarding the characteristics of possible employees, María and Elena agreed that character plays a major role while selecting their team, María stating that *“You can be super qualified. You can have a lot of experience. Be a great pizza maker. Best pizza maker in Mexico. But if we do not like your character, we don't hire you.”* Elena argued that *“everyone can learn if they want to, but to change someone's attitude is almost impossible.”*

By these statements, both María and Elena argue that character is more important than competences of employees. In other words, this would mean that meaning has a bigger impact on the practices of the team than competences in the way that female entrepreneurs view their employees. Furthermore, María and Elena's statements can be linked to female entrepreneurs being nurturing and collaborative, making sure their employees are part of a team (Bullough et al., 2021).

Considering routine daily tasks, such as cooking and cleaning practices, Lorena argues that a big part of her day consists of checking her employees. Employees tick off the tasks they have done at a checklist, which Lorena checks when she arrives at work in the morning; *‘I need to be checking, that is my main job.’*, stating her employees can say that they have completed a task whereas they actually have not.

The businesses differed in size, varying from having a team of six employees to twenty-four. Employees were valued highly by their ROs, being mentioned many times during the interviews. After asking her what it was that she values most about her team, Elisa answers the following:

*“The energy, the vibe, and also everything. Because the staff kind of is everything. (...) At the end of the day, in terms of the experience the customer gets, is through the staff. Definitely, like the service they get, the quality of the products they are served, how clean it is. (...) Without them, it doesn't really work.”*

What can be derived from this quote, is that the physical entity of the restaurant (materiality) is nothing without its practitioners (the team). The restaurant runs by practices as customer service, food preparation and cleaning practices, which all need to be executed by employees. All of these practices are built up by its materiality in the form of equipment or ingredients; executed because the team knows how to do so; and practised because employees need to do so for their boss. Added up to this, they act out the practice as part of their job, which they need to earn money. When thinking about it more elaborately, money is a form of capital (materiality), which means that the practice of working to earn money is leading to another practice, using the money to pay rent or buy new shoes. Indirectly, the practice of employees of serving customers or cleaning the restaurant is then part of a bigger network of practices; the practices that are made possible by the money that is earned by working at the RB. Zooming out, more networks can be related to the RB, as the products that are sold by the RB are consumed by customers, brought to them by suppliers and seen online by people on social media platforms.

Rita highly values the given that her team *‘can get in love with their jobs’*. Rita: *“Sometimes I think as an owner, because you have a lot of things in your mind and to solve and to attend to, sometimes you lose the little details.”* To have a team that is committed and loves their job, is something that Rita is really grateful for.

In terms of hiring employees, the social network of the participants is important. Three of the participants told that the first employees they contracted were friends, or people they got to know

through friends. Half of the ROs said that they encountered their staff through the internet. One participant is part of a network of restaurants that handles their HR.

Elena explained that she enjoys the input of her team. She describes their contribution as follows:

*"Everyone brings something different to the team and that's all important. Or things that you didn't even know that were important. And how it can add to the value of your restaurant is so cool. I love that. (...) I think it's most important to know that, although there's people here that work 10 hours a day, they're your waiter, but that's not the only thing that they can do. Maybe they play instruments, maybe everything."* One of her employees does magic for guests during dinner sometimes, whereas another person from the team helps out with the graphic design of the menu.

For Elisa and her brother, their first employee Julia has been of big importance. Both Elisa and her business partner did not have any experience in the restaurant industry, and Julia has been a big to them. *"Julia especially has been a key member of the team because of her expertise, because she takes care of us, because we have a personal relationship, but also because she takes care of the business. Whenever we're not physically here, she's like, I have so much trust in her that I'm not worried. I even trust her more. And so for me, as a woman, has been really cool to know that."*

Other than being of importance for the functioning of the RB, Lorena stated that she gets her 'happy moments' come from seeing her team helping each other, *"to go and see and see that they are getting along well. And that they are bonding."* The same applies to Rita, who mentioned seeing her employees grow is a reason she enjoys her job. Rita: *"above all, see how she arrived and what she is like now. Those are the things I say, I come back to the same thing, it's like because of her. People like her are worth all the hassle, all the work, which is a lot of truth behind it. So it's very satisfying."*

Building upon the importance of the team, all ROs agreed that they highly value their employees. Elisa and Carmen specifically mentioned that many employees are part of the queer community. For Elisa 'being open to absolutely everybody' has been one of the core values since the beginning. Elisa: *"because it's one of our core values as founders of me and my brother, me as a woman and also as a queer person with me and my brother."*

Lastly, Gloria feels that her team is committed to the vision of La Adelita, which greatly contributes to the business. Gloria: *"Rather, I am more than sure that all of us who are here are committed to the issue of gender violence and want to create other realities."*

Later, María said that she cannot believe the success of her business, guessing that it is a question of insecurity: *"Maybe because I am a woman, maybe because everything has cost me a lot of work and maybe sometimes I think it was luck. Maybe it's wrong to think like that, but I often find it hard to see that it was us and our work to achieve this. Sometimes I think I don't know why it happened."* This feeling of uncertainty about her success and not being able to believe it, is in line with the idea that a lack of confidence is hindering women in developing their business, as researched by Hallak et al. (2018).

The general question in this section was: *What competences do female restaurant owners in Mexico City use to run their business?*

In terms of education and experience, most ROs lack formal education in restaurant management. One RO has a career in restaurant management, and one RO is a trained chef. Considering know-how and skills, it can be concluded that business partners play a critical role in providing knowledge, especially in the opening phase of the restaurant. Related to business partners, family was embedded significantly in the RB in multiple ways. Three ROs run the business together with their brother, and for two ROs family members were role models that made them choose the

industry. The skills, character and attitude were competences of employees that were valued highly by the ROs, acknowledging their contribution to the atmosphere in the RB.

In the last four sections of this chapter, the daily practices and meaning, material and competences that are involved with those practices have been brought to light. In the next two sections, the relations between those practices to will be brought to light through the framework of *zooming in*, in section 4.5, and to in relation to their context in section 4.6: *zooming out*.

After a trip to her husband's home country, Lorena and her husband Leo joked about bringing one of the delicacies to Mexico, as Lorena loves them so much. In 2018 they started a market stall, preparing the food at home and bringing all equipment and material by Uber to markets during the weekends. A year later they bought a food truck, selling the delicacies at big events and music festivals. Sometime later they opened their first establishment La Molina and not long after their second place Restaurante Coyo, selling savoury delicacies. A third space close to these two establishments is used as storage for the food truck that they still use for festivals. Instead of the coffee and sweet delicacies that they sold at music festivals at the beginning, they now bring the food from Restaurante Coyo to festivals – these products being faster to prepare on the spot, and having a greater demand with people that have been drinking. Lorena explained the days close to festivals are always busy, leading her team to work more hours. This change in establishments, locations and food preparations show how every practice is dependent on the location and material – showing the interrelation of practices.

## 4.5. Zooming in

*How do practices relate to each other and how do they intertwine?*

In this section the practices that are discussed in sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 will be put in relation to each other.

Before we dive into three bundles that portray the links between practices and how these practices are built up by the three elements of Shove et al. (2012), a reference will be made to figure 2.2. In this figure, Shove et al. (2012) claim that practices link to each other in three phases: the pre-formation, formation and deformation. In the pre-formation phase, practices have not yet been linked to each other, existing separately in the same location. In the formation status, links between practices are made, which can be broken in the deformation phase. In this state, links between practices are not made any longer. All of the respondents mentioned that opening a restaurant and sustaining their businesses has been an ongoing process. According to María, *“being a leader of this project is a constant learning process. And you have to have a lot of humility, patience and clarity in what you want to propose.”* Considering that all routines and all practices are changing constantly, this process is in line with the notions of practice theory (Shove et al., 2012).

Referring back to section 2.1.1, the links between those practices are defined to build up a practice bundle, which is a set of practices that hang together and are interconnected in more or less strong and enduring ways. Practices are built up by competences, meaning and material, and the practice bundle changes when one of the practices alters, or one of the elements alters.

Those practice bundles together build up a practice complex. A practice complex is a larger set of practices that is located at a specific location, or in other words, a phenomenon that is built up by various practice bundles. In this research, ‘running a restaurant’ can be seen as a central practice complex. In this section of zooming in, the bundles that build up this complex are explored.

The three practice bundles that will be highlighted are the phenomena of *social media engagement, making pasta* and *creating a safe work environment*.

### 4.5.1 Social media engagement

A tool and skill that was regularly talked about during the interviews, was the use of social media. All participants use social media to communicate their activities, menus and updates about their restaurant. Elena specifically mentioned that she takes care of the communication of the restaurant, and that she loves *‘having the main control of how our restaurant is communicated.’* This is opposite to Elisa, who stated that she *‘hates social media’*, and said that her business partner is taking care of the social media platforms (mostly Instagram). During the interviews it came to light that having social media exposure is of big importance to the restaurant holders. Rita explained the impact as follows:

*“If you can’t get viral by Instagram or TikTok, your business is in danger. (...) Not only just to expect that people are going to come in an organic way, it doesn’t work like that right now. And also you have to invest in good pictures to do your own reels and to do your own stories and upload stories every day, or to do a reel at least three or four times per week. And then you have to study all the*

*statistics to know when followers watch your stories, all that information. I wasn't aware of that until this year."*

As Rita explained, you cannot expect people just to come across your restaurant physically anymore, like it was before the rise of social media platforms. Posting (or rather) *'going viral'* on social media is necessary to get people to come to your business. Going viral means that your post has reached lots of people on social media platforms. During the interview with Elisa, Café Naranja, the phenomenon of going viral and the impact of guests coming to the restaurant was discussed. This piece of the conversation portrays the process, after which an elaboration on the different elements will be given.

*"There was this TikTok a few months ago in August that came viral, and from one day to the next, like, literally one day went by, and we doubled our sales. So for me, that was, like, a huge lesson and reminder of how powerful social media can be as a tool for the business. So I've had to suck it up, my personal beliefs about social media, but luckily, Paulo is the one that takes care of it. So I'm just like, you do that.*

*I: That's insane. And was it, like, Mexicans or mostly tourists?*

*R: So it was funny. It was so evident. It was so obvious. It was because of that, and it was many stages. First it was Mexicans who lived in the area, and then it was Mexicans who lived in the city that came over the weekend to this area. Then it was foreigners, and then it was Mexicans from outside of the city. You saw a video, and you live in the city, you're like, okay, I'll go there. I don't know. You live two blocks away, and you're like, I'll go there tomorrow. You live in other areas of the cities, and you're like, I'll go this weekend or the next one. And then.. three weeks or a month went by, and it was people who saw the video, they lived in the country and knew they were coming to Mexico City in the next month, and so they came to Naranja. So it was like, different stages. It was crazy. Yeah, because, again, it was so obvious. It was because of that viral."*

As portrayed in this piece, social media mostly impacts the guests that find your restaurant, divided over the different stages of people who live in the area, people who live further away, and people who are in the city for holidays. This way of attracting people to your business is very different from decennia, or even a decade ago, when ROs would have other marketing techniques, and guests would approach restaurant physically.

Even though social media was gradually discussed during the one-on-one interviews, the effect of social media was not as clear as to the point that the reunion with all participants was organised. At a specific moment during the meeting, the participants discussed bloggers and going viral on social media, followed by an exchange of bloggers and their range, how much money these bloggers ask and how their experience with the specific bloggers was. Social media is of big importance in the socio-cultural context of the RBs in Mexico City, and asks for devices (material), knowledge about managing a social media account and strategy (competences) and ideas about how to promote your business on social media platforms (meaning).

An interesting paradox in this phenomenon is that the ROs need to use their working time in their businesses on their social media strategy and content. In practical terms, this has the consequence that they are working on their devices in the restaurant, while clients who they want to connect with are present. In other words, social media has changed the practice of ROs connecting with their clients, showing the way in which practices are changing and adapting constantly (Shove et al, 2012).

In terms of conceptualising social media platforms in practice theory, it has been hard to define what a social media platform is. As the existence of social media platforms can be considered to be a physical entity, it has been chosen to conceptualise 'social media platforms' as a change of material of the practice 'social media engagement.'. However, it can also be seen as a change in

context of the RO – which would relate to zooming out practices. Hence it has been chosen to use the concepts of Shove et al. (2012), defining social media platforms to be part of the ‘material’ of the practice ‘social media engagement’.

The alteration of this practice bundle is an effect of social media platforms getting more influence in society, which is a change in the context in which the practice of social media engagement is embedded. This changes the shape of the ‘social media engagement’ practice when zooming in.

When conceptualising this effect of social media further, the impact can be seen as a vicious circle, referring to practices developing over time (Shove et al. 2012).

By the introduction of social media platforms in the RI in Mexico City, social media posts have the influence of people finding the restaurant. Being active on social media platforms is seen as an essential part of sustaining the business, what would mean that not being part, means your business does not compete with the other businesses. Therefore, the logical choice for sustaining the business, is to be active on those social media platforms; avoiding the risk of potential guests going to other businesses that did ‘go viral’. Consequently, every business joins social media platforms, increasing its impact even more. As been brought to light in the fieldwork, this requires time and effort. In the circle that has been portrayed in figure 4.3, the ‘*realisation impact social media*’ is in bold, as it portrays the shift in marketing techniques, after which ROs decide to put time and effort in their account. Essentially, the goal of this investment is to ‘go viral’, but this is not a given. When this practice of time and effort (as described by Rita, for example posting three or four times a week), succeeds; the RB name goes viral and reaches a bigger population, increasing clientele. This increase of clientele makes the RB realise the impact of social media platforms, leading to more RBs taking part. When conceptualising this given, social media platforms are material (even though immaterial) elements in the context of the complex ‘marketing’, and ROs taking part are practice alterations in their daily routines. Consequently, taking part in social media platforms is a necessary practice, only making the impact of those platforms even bigger.

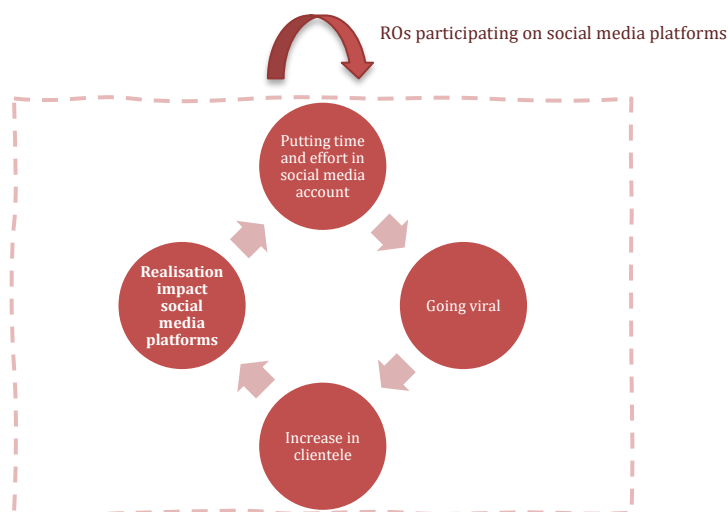


Figure 4.3: impact of social media platforms

Research by Khoo et al. (2023) highlighted how women are at a disadvantage when it comes to gaining digital competences, touching upon barriers such as a scarcity of access to devices, training and infrastructure; balancing work-life; reliance on supporting staff and family network and worries about safety and security. Even though social media was discussed as a competence and skill to get better at, this hinder does not seem to apply to this group of women in Mexico City. All of them had access to a device and generally enjoy doing this practice of social media engagement; not stating any hinders or dependencies. Also in the internship project, the impact of the grant was tested through the increase of the amount of followers that the social media account of grant winners had reached. When the ROs applied, it was necessary to send their social media accounts, and during the project itself, American Express made videos of the winners to post on their social media accounts. Even though not stated this way; taking part in the project already increases the visibility of the RBs accounts on social media platforms. By this increase in participation and the increase in importance of social media as a consequence of this participation, being active on social media platforms can be seen not to be an optional tool or skill anymore, as discussed at the beginning of this section. For the women ROs in Mexico City, the use of social media can be seen as a necessity in the complex of running a RB.

#### 4.5.2 Making pasta

*During one of the visits, María and her partner Paulo take me upstairs to show the establishment where the pastas are made. They showed me the time-consuming technique of making pasta by hand, explaining that every single order of pasta is prepared this way. Sometimes up to sixty plates a night. With the grant they will purchase new equipment to make more pastas in one time, making the process easier for the chefs that prepare the meal.*

Relating to figure 2.3, the practice of making pasta is a practice that is built up by the elements material (a small pasta machine), competences (knowing how to make pasta) and meaning (making pasta by hand).

This practice of making pasta is bundled with the practices ‘use of products’ and ‘serving food’, which are practices that are built up by elements too. One important notion is the fact that these practices are – in conflict with the definition of bundle that is used in this research – not evidently dependent on one another. It is possible to prepare food without serving it. However, as these practices are part of the bigger complex of running a restaurant, it can be stated that the general meaning of running a restaurant has the consequence that the preparation of food cannot be seen apart from serving food; as this is the objective of running La Magnolía.

Figure 4.3 portrays the practice bundle of serving pasta in La Magnolía. Without the pasta machine, the three practices ‘*use of products*’, ‘*preparing pasta*’ and ‘*serving food*’ are not intertwined, as pasta cannot be made. With the pasta machine, those links do occur, as products are used (and required) to make the pasta. After this preparation, the plate will be served to guests, referring to the practice of ‘*serving food*’. The elements of material, competences and meaning are also portrayed in these two figures, as it will be shown later how everything is intertwined, and how these elements are also dependent on and part of other practices; for example referring to supply problems as discussed in section 2.2.2.

Zooming in on the practice bundle of ‘serving pasta in La Magnolía’, it can be studied how different practices relate to each other and how they intertwine. Firstly, an overview of the practices in this practice bundle will be given, including the elements by which they are shaped. This visualisation in figure 4.4 portrays the practice bundle as it is with the smaller machine; *before* the material alteration in the practice making pasta.



Figure 4.4: the practice bundle of serving pasta with the old machine, with the machine shown in the figure.

As described in section 2.1.1, an alteration in one element in one practice in the practice bundle, can change the other practices in the bundle. In this section the effects of the new machine on the other practices will be visualised.

The situation of deformation occurs when the new kitchen equipment is introduced. Skills need to be learned again and the chef needs to learn how to use the new kitchen equipment. In La Magnolía, the kitchen equipment change might have multiple effects in the relations between practices. New links are formed when the machine is in use again, with the effect of creating more pasta with less work. The meaning of bringing Italian pasta to Mexico City stays the same, but it cannot be denied that the meaning for the practitioner has changed. Where all hand-made pasta was a sign of craft work, this work will be made easier with a bigger machine.

In this way, material does affect competences, and this does influence meaning. And at the same time, in relation to the restaurant and bigger context, more people will be able to enjoy Italian pasta as the restaurant will be able to grow further. By buying this machine, the process of making pasta is less time-consuming and therefore money-saving. This money can be used for other materiality for the restaurant and give new opportunities for the development of La Magnolía

Referring to Shove et al. (2012), practices are made up by material, meaning and competences. Changes in elements result in alterations in the shape of practices, and these result in changes in bundles. Changing the kitchen equipment can have the result that Restaurante La Magnolía has a big increase in sales, increasing the *'serving food'* practices and therefore economic capital. Consequently, this could even result in the decision to increase the space of the restaurant, or even open a new establishment.

Coming back to the research question in this section, practices relate to each other by the overall meaning of the RO of wanting to serve Italian food in Mexico City. In addition to this, it is affirmed that practices intertwine, as an alteration in one practice affects the shape of other practices in the bundle.

### 4.5.3 Creating a safe working environment

In sections 4.5.1. and 4.5.2 the practice bundles of social media engagement and pasta preparation have been highlighted. These bundles show the adaptation of practices to changes in other practices, or in the bigger complex. In this third exploration of a practice bundle, it will be described how the ROs make sure they offer a safe working environment for their employees.

All participants valued creating a comfortable space for employees and visitors. Seven ROs mentioned that they thoughtfully take actions to make their employees feel comfortable. They highly value their employees and want them to feel comfortable in their work environment, which is the creation of meaning within their practices. Zooming into one particular practice within this practice bundle, Lorena set up an email account to which employees can send an email anonymously, in order to maintain a safe space.

Lorena: *"I know that women in some restaurants are harassed. Sexually, verbally, psychologically, like whatever. So to avoid that, we have made an anonymous mail, so they can complain whichever situation. Maybe they don't feel like telling us, because they are ashamed or whatever. Luckily we haven't had any complaints so far, but it's something that we mention from time to time when we have meetings. Or we bring it up."*

In this particular practice, the e-mail account is the materiality that contributes to the creation of a safe environment, or rather, the feeling of a safe environment. Even though the e-mail might not even be used by the employees, only the existence of it can contribute to the feeling of working in a comfortable environment within the team (meaning). At the same time, setting up the account, actively referring to it during meetings and being involved with it, is built up by the element of competences.

Other than this particular practice, Lorena also makes sure that female employees do not work together with male employees in La Molina, as it is a very small working space, and she wants to avoid that her employees feel uncomfortable to work that close to each other. In this practice, material (having a small space) therefore mostly affects this management decision of Lorena.

The ROs not only want to have a space that is safe for their employees, but evenly value a space that is comfortable for their guests. Elisa creates this by *'having a nice playlist that everybody will like and enjoy at a nice volume.'* As her team puts on the playlist during the day, she also acknowledges that *'music has been a good filter to know if there is a connection,'* in the process of hiring new employees.

This section gives an answer to the question: *'How do the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City interact and interrelate?'*

Practices are in constant development, which has been discussed in the theory by Shove (2012) and has been concluded by the social media engagement example in 4.5.1, and the way in which the process of making pasta changes when materiality changes are made in section 4.5.2.

Referring to the concepts as defined by Shove et al. (2012), the complex 'running a restaurant business' is built up by practices that are interconnected within bundles. A change in one practice affects others, as shown by the way in which social media engagement impacts the reach of customers, resulting in social media to be an integral part of restaurant management. New machinery in pasta making changes the efficiency of the practice, and therefore altering the meaning too. Lastly, the ROs value a safe working environment, in which the values of ROs are embedded in everything: as shown by the way that music is used as hiring filter.

From this notion of zooming in, a movement of zooming out is made, exploring the way in which the complex of running a business is embedded its' context. This section is introduced by a vignette on Mexico City.

Figure 4.5: the sign stating that the separate wagons need to be respected (author)



*'We serve for women being able to travel free of sexual violence'* shares the poster that is put along the platform of the metro, bus, tram and train lines in Mexico City. Every vehicle in public transport has assigned the first wagons – painted pink with pink chairs – to be for women, children up until 12 years old, and people in wheelchairs. This policy of separate wagons shows that the municipality is putting effort in creating a safer city for women, while facing high numbers of femicide, gender violence and disappearances. It is a situation that the new president of Mexico – Claudia Sheinbaum – will have to face. She has been appointed as the first female president of the country, with years of experience as mayor of Mexico City.

Within this metropolis of millions and millions of people, thousands of kilometres of public transport railways, hundreds of hours of traffic jams a week and inhabitants having endless time, the eight restaurant businesses Naranja, Los Raíces, El Charola, La Molina & Coyo, La Magnolía, La Adelita, Arból de la Esperanza and Los Cachuchas are located. This last section of the results chapter will zoom out and study the ways in which the context of Mexico City influences the practices of the owners of those businesses, giving a helicopter view on their practices.



Figure 4.6: women are waiting to get on the train – in front of the wagon that is for women

## 4.6. Zooming out

*How are the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City embedded in its socio-cultural, entrepreneurial and spatial context?*

Referring to restaurants being part of urban life, as discussed by Landau-Donnelly et al. (2024) in section 2.1, this section discusses the practices of ROs in relation to the urban life of Mexico City. Related to the practice bundles that are discovered while zooming in in section 4.5, this section centralises the choices that ROs have made as a reaction to the context in which their businesses are located. In this subchapter the embeddedness of the female ROs in Mexico City is discussed, following the notion of *zooming out*.

### 4.6.1 Reviewing concepts

Before diving into the relations between practices and the context, one remark on the conceptualization of the embeddedness needs to be made. All factors that affect the practices of the ROs cannot be put under a definition of solely the entrepreneurial environment, spatial and socio-cultural context; as they have been conceptualised in the conceptual model in section 2.4. When taking the '*entrepreneurial environment*' of the RBs, it is hard to define where is referred to. Do you refer to just the RI in terms of policies in Mexico City/Mexico/or globally? Does it also include the relations with other RBs in the neighbourhood of the ROs? In this specific example, the relations with other RBs could also be put under the spatial context of the RB (as discussing the neighbours in the '*physical environment*' of the RB), but also refer to the socio-cultural context of the RO; as the neighbouring RBs also will have a human owner; and how does gender play a role in this? In other words, all of the conceptualised contexts will actually be a fusion of them all. Rather than discussing those '*environments*' separately, the main factors that are found to be affecting the practices of female ROs in this research will be discussed as emergent themes. The entrepreneurial environment, spatial and socio-cultural context will all be referred to as the embeddedness of the owner and the establishment.

Furthermore, it is an important notion to take in mind that individual actions and social structures are shaped by individual actions; while these structures are also reproduced and possibly altered by those actions (Giddens, 1984). During the interview, Gloria referred to this idea by Giddens by stating the following: "*The percentage of women who run a company is minimal and women who are really gender and class sensitive are much less. In other words, just because you are a woman and you are at the top of a company or you are a director, this does not guarantee that there will be a change. It is a woman generally reproducing violent, sexist and class-based, exploitative practices*" (Gloría).

Stating that a woman at a top position does not guarantee that there will be a change, relates to the idea that everything in society is gendered. Practices are all performed in this society of policies, having the consequence that even women reproduce violent and sexist practices. Moreover, the quote underlines that not every woman automatically takes actions to prevent sexist and class-based practices – just because she is a woman. In other words, being a woman does not automatically mean that you perform feminist practices. As this research is done through a feminist lens, this is an important notion to keep in mind.

Related to this notion of feminism, it is also key to take into account the understanding of intersectionality. When talking about opportunities and difficulties for women in the industry, three of the eight participants stated that intersectionality is of big importance. Both Elisa and Gloria mention that it is not only your gender that affects your position, but also your class or *'things that permeate us'* (Gloría). Furthermore, she not only states the RI to be a male environment, but also a space with *'a lot of people from a higher social class.'*

#### 4.6.2 Gender violence

Building upon the creation of safety *in the RB*, that is discussed in 4.5.3, this section discusses the ways in which ROs adjust their practices to the safety concerns in the 'outside' context of Mexico City.

One particular practice relates to the working hours of the (female) employees. As discussed in 4.5.3, Lorena makes sure that male and female employees do not work together in La Molina, as there is little space behind the counter in the café. Also in her second establishment, Restaurante Coyo, women and men have different working hours, though this has a different reason. The restaurant has shifts during the day and shifts till after 11pm. As women have to cope with harassment in public transport or in the streets more than men, Lorena has decided that her female employees in Restaurante Coyo only work during the day. As La Molina only has female employees because of the small space, the employee that works the latest shift (till 11pm), always ends the working day alone. Lorena has agreed with this employee that she is allowed to leave earlier and still get paid fully: *'if you finish early, you can leave. And I'm going to still pay you till 11, because it was a busy day or whatever. If you have to stay a little bit more. I'm going to pay you double that time. That is not going to change. But if you finish early, you leave early. Because I don't want you to risk yourself, and I don't want you to stay here, scratching your head, not knowing what to do.'* Later, she adds that La Molina is one of the last businesses that closes in the area, *'and it's quite dark.'* Also when Lorena and her husband Leo organize gatherings with the team and they finish late, they order an Uber for the female employees, *'because we know they live far, so we want them to arrive safe to their destination.'*

Relating back to practice theory, this adjustment of the working hours of the employees is intertwined with the materiality of the restaurant – referring to the lack of space behind the counter in La Molina - resulting in only scheduling female employees in this RB. At the same time, being one of the last businesses in the area that is operating around 11pm, is part of the entrepreneurial context (as it entails other RBs) and the spatial context (the physical/geographical location of the establishment in the area).

Seven of the eight RBs are located in areas that are considered safe in the city, but Las Cachuchas operates in a neighborhood that faces high crime rates – nonetheless having parts that are gentrifying. As a result of this location (spatial context), Raquel and her business partners have decided to close their doors at 8pm on a Friday and Saturday. Later in the evening the clientele is not too high and *'it turns a little bit dangerous'*.

Being inevitably related to the work- and opening times, are the long distances and commute hours in Mexico City. Living and working in Mexico City means that commutes to every other part of the city can be time-consuming, or how Lorena put it into context: *'there's a joke that Mexico*

*City is 3 hours from Mexico City.* During peak hours it can take lots of time to go from North to South, not only affecting working hours, but also the behaviour towards being on time and expectations from the team, as they are aware that employees can live far away from work. Lorena: *'we try to be flexible with them [employees], because we know the metro, the traffic, time to time, we also encounter those situations. That's the main one. Luckily I have that privilege because in this city, that's a privilege, right? To be living close to your work.'*

Three ROs mentioned that their home is close to their business, just as Lorena stating that this is a privilege in the city. Both Gloría and Raquel explained that they live relatively far from their business, Raquel and her mom travelling about an hour and a quarter drive.

Just as Los Cachuchas, feminist social bakery La Adelita has also adjusted their opening times due to safety concerns. The bakery has opened as a response to gender violence, aiming to empower women in Mexico City. In this particular case of La Adelita, a striking duality can be observed, which has been visualised in figure 4.7 A step-by-step discussion of the situation will be given underneath the figure, in which the starting point is considered to be gender violence.

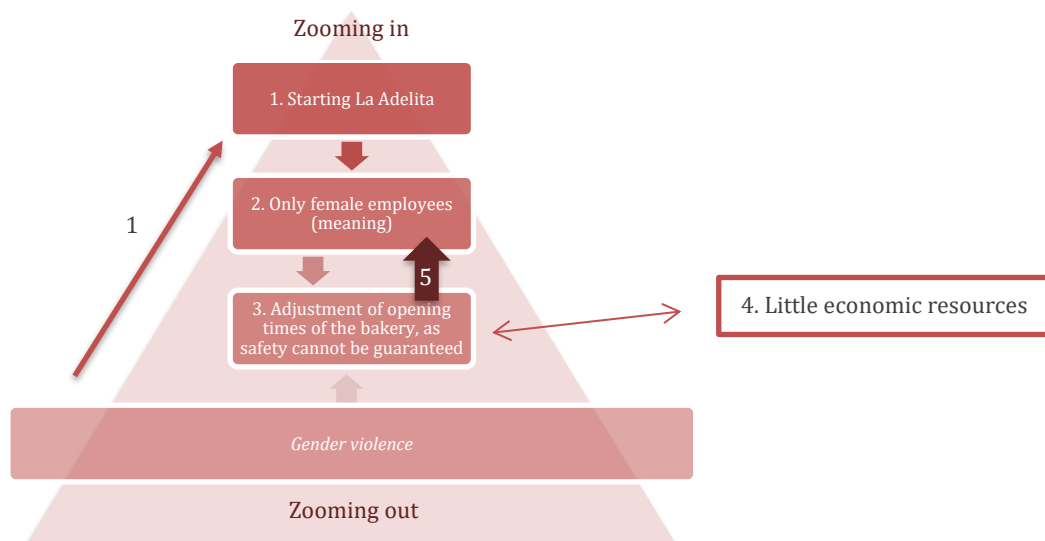


Figure 4.7: the interrelation of meaning in the framework of zooming in and zooming out – La Adelita

1. As a response to high numbers of gender violence, La Adelita has opened as a social bakery that offers bread making workshops and therapy sessions.
2. Touching upon the vignette that introduces section 4.2 on meaning, La Adelita has evolved from the ideal of bringing women together, and therefore solely hiring female employees. As their objective is to empower women, Gloría shares that "we are only going to hire female bakers, right?"
3. Normally, bakers start their work early in the morning, to be able to open the bakery at around 8 o'clock. However, Panadaría La Adelita opens at 12pm, to avoid their female employees to work night shifts. Gloría explains that 'we open at midday because we still don't have the resources to generate security for night work for a baker.'
4. Referring to the high numbers of gender violence in the city, security would be needed to be able to work night hours at the bakery. This is in relation to the resources that are required to generate this security – materiality.

5. Simultaneously, the creation of meaning is also part of this practice, as Gloria continues by sharing that “we are only going to hire female bakers, right?” Touching upon the vignette that introduces section 4.2 on meaning, La Adelita has evolved from the ideal of bringing women together, and therefore solely hiring female employees.

*Gender violence – the reason why the bakery opened in the first place– is the reason that the bakery is not able to open during the morning, missing income, and therefore generating less economic capital (material). Economic capital could help to invest in resources for night shifts to allow the bakery to be opened in the morning too – generating more income.*

In other words, for Panadaría La Adelita, meaning affects the business in the form that they only sustain jobs for female employees. Consequently, those female employees do not work night shifts, as a result of 1) caretaking for employees by the owner, and therefore being a good boss – relating to Ferriman et al. (2009), stating that women entrepreneurs are compassionate (also related to the creation of La Adelita); and 2) not having enough economic capital to generate security for night shifts. As concluded by many researches on female entrepreneurship before, women-led businesses tend to have less economic capital available Balachandra et al., 2019; Kanze et al., 2017; Wilson, 2016). At the same time, this process shows how the meaning of La Adelita is to make the context in which it is embedded better, but they are held back by this context.

In figure 4.8 it is portrayed how the meaning of La Adelita affects the functioning of the business; and how this functioning is eventually also a consequence of the reason why La Adelita has been started in the first place. This figure relates to the conceptual model, but in figure 4.7 it is put the other way around on purpose; showing how a practice of a RO is influenced by the bigger context in which it is embedded – following the notion of zooming out. The dualism in this particular example is that La Adelita opened with the aim of helping women, facing the consequence that it needs to adjust the functioning to the context of Mexico City for women.

#### 4.6.3 ‘Women belong in the kitchen’

Even though not being directly related to the practices of ROs in relation to their job as a RO of a RB, there is one situation that was discussed clearly highlights the barriers for women in leadership practices. This situation will discuss the theory of role incongruity first, after which multiple situations of prejudices in daily lives of women ROs will be discussed.

In section 4.2.2, Rita described that she quit her old job as a result of not meeting the expectations of her (male) colleagues. She was the only woman at the office, where she worked in a high position, which used to be her dream. However, Rita told that she is ‘*not good at relationships in the company*’, because she is ‘*super honest and sometimes I’m super tough or direct expressing myself*.’ However, ‘*here in Mexico it’s not acceptable as that*,’ explains Rita. She had a hard time functioning in this high position by barriers that were put up by her colleagues, and after some time she decided to quit. This situation that Rita described at her old work situation relates to the theory of role incongruity, as discussed by Eagle & Karau (2002) in section 2.3.3. Role incongruity means that people (in this case Rita’s colleagues at her old job) discover a mismatch of their expectations of a role with the behaviour that someone (Rita) performs. Ferriman et al. (2009) has shown that women are mostly associated with characteristics such as feminine, compassionate and communal, while men are linked to assertiveness, dominant and independent. Assertiveness and being direct are considered to be male traits, and are viewed less preferable when they are practiced by a woman, Rita. According to Eagly & Karau (2002), hindrances are created for women to

become leaders and reach successes as a consequence of this form of prejudice. This is exactly what has happened to Rita in her old job, leading her to quiet. Now she is her own boss, she is grateful for the job that she has.

Being a minority in the industry, female ROs experience the RI to be a male environment. María pointed out that almost all people giving out permits for the restaurant were male, and defining the RI to be *'machista'*. This is in line with the Mexican culture as defined by Egan (2001). Five of the eight women did experience gender related difficulties in relation to suppliers, or people they worked with. In three cases a male employee quit working for them. According to the women, this was based on him not being able to accept his boss was a woman. At Café Naranja for example, Elisa had an encounter with a male employee: *"There was this one time that me and my brother were here, and he [employee] wouldn't refer to me, he just referred to my brother sometimes. It took us a while to notice that, (...). So if he had an issue, he would wait for my brother to be here."* The employee left one week after this confrontation. Elisa explained: *"Yeah, my brother was doing HR back then, so he [brother] did the interview, and he [employee] didn't realize that there were two bosses, I guess, until the day-to-day."*

Considering suppliers, the relationship overall is experienced differently. Most ROs did not experience many problems, mainly because *'I pay them.'* (Carmen). However, Rita does see that a female RO in her street has problems with suppliers sometimes. Rita: *"I think here in Mexico, most of us think that men are the only ones who can make decisions or those types of decisions. That's the only explanation that I have and why they ask for that. And even with this girl that is the owner from the 'birria' (Mexican dish) place, sometimes I can see her, how she's dealing with some suppliers that are different. And sometimes I can hear her voice, like having kind of discussions and I know for sure, maybe from my past experience, that if she were a man, there will be no necessity to yell, because maybe with your energy, with your male energy, the other person is going to be like, okay."* Related to competences and also discussed in section 4.4., Rita later shared that she wants to learn more about products and the things she buys, as she wants to know what her suppliers talk about. Rita: *'I need to talk the same language, and not be surprised about everything that the suppliers are telling you. They can talk bullshit to me.'*

Especially in relation to male contractors and the person who the women rent the establishment from, two women experienced that men were talking to their male business partners, but not to them. This goes hand in hand with prejudices as a woman not *'having knowledge'*, referring to women having to deal with prejudices, as discussed in section 2.3.3 (Bullough et al., 2021). Carmen runs her business alone and has been in the same situation when she wanted to start the restaurant. For her, also her young age caused the owner of the establishment to question her. Also María was judged to be too young, and when starting the business, the manager of the renovation only talked to her husband Paulo. María: *"Every time the manager came, he would call my husband. Until I told him, it's me. This place is in my name. In my name. Okay? Respect us both."*

These examples portray that female ROs often face resistance from male colleagues and employees who struggle to accept a woman in authority.

The majority of the ROs have had problems with clients in the restaurant, but all of them agreed that this truly was a matter of *'the person itself'* (Lorena), and was not related to them as the owner specifically or gender related. However, María did experience that guests tend to have more respect for her husband Paulo, giving her the feeling that they fear her, *'because I've had to impose myself. But they only respect him because he's the male boss. I had to impose myself on him. I had to tell him, you're going to do what I know, I'm not going to do. And I hate having to do that, but I had to do it. I like to try to see how we inspire them, tell them, explain to them. But sometimes, if they don't want to, you have to do this. And Paulo doesn't have to do it. I've had to do it.'*

As touched upon in section 4.5.3, all women agreed that a safe and comfortable working environment is important for them team, also corresponding to treatment of employees in the industry. Elena has been working in the restaurant industry for a very long time and does not experience many difficulties as a woman. She underlines that ability is key: *"I think what is important to take into the workplace if you are a woman.. I think it's to go into work knowing that ability is key. I think naturally, if you go in and you feel.. Because I think there are some women who feel naturally at a disadvantage or maybe that it's a topic that concerns them, I think it's always healthy to not think about that part. I think if you go into work and there's examples of that kind of mentality in your workplace, just leave, because I don't think there's ever a shortage of work."*

When Gloría started working with a funder that is doing projects with social impact, she experienced that the social impact would be defined as sustainability, and a topic as feminism would not be included. She found that she did not want to get involved with these funders: *"and in the end, going down that road has meant that I have to be in that other sector that always excludes me, right? Because I'm a woman and I don't belong to it, right? So, how to fight against that already."*

#### 4.6.4. Opportunities in the dead jungle

Building upon the general feeling of living in Mexico City by the female ROs, this section discusses the opportunities for women in Mexico City with regards to the RI.

Elisa experiences Mexico City to be 'open' in terms of opportunities for women. For her, the ability to choose to move out of her hometown to Mexico City was of great importance. There is a significant difference between Mexico City and the rest of Mexico, especially regarding the role of women. Three ROs argue that Mexico has a macho culture, where women are traditionally still seen as the caregivers of the family. Elisa mentions: *"socially, there have been some changes, slowly getting into each corner of society. Right. Your question was between Mexico City and my city, that has been a huge difference. I think Mexico City for sure is way more open. I'm not really quite sure what the reason is, but I'm pretty sure it's really linked to religion and social conceptions of how things should be, both from male and women."* Also in terms of being open to the queer community, Elisa mentions Mexico City is open. *"We're on it, but slowly and, yeah, just living in a more open society, for sure has some impact, not just in how you interact with your city, but also how the city interacts with you."*

Carmen experiences Mexico City to be a 'dead jungle'. She mentions that she loves Mexican culture and traditions, but the problems are caused by the government: *"We have a lot of narco traffic, and the politics and the government don't know how to control that. (...) And the narcotraffic camps can make Mexico the worst place to live, because we have a lot of insecurity, we have a lot of violence. That makes me want to go out of Mexico. (...) So, yes, I love Mexico, but living in Mexico is like living in a dead jungle. (...) If I can have the opportunity to go out, I will go out."*

In terms of opportunities for women in the restaurant industry, Carmen explains that *"the restaurants and the bars generate a lot of work here in Mexico."* She feels that *"We [women] have a lot of opportunities here in the restaurants, but the industry has to change. It had to change because for women or for men, the treatment is horrible. So it has to change. We are human, so we cannot work a whole day. We cannot. We cannot work with no social opportunities."*

Striking is that three women mention the win of Elena Reygadas as best female chef in the world as a win for the restaurant industry and opportunities for women, being in line with the notion of role models being a positive influence for women entrepreneurs (Ferriman et al. 2009). Also, María stated that the bank gives out loans at lower rates to female entrepreneurs, creating opportunity for female ROs. An interesting addition to this support for women, is that Elena Reygadas has started a scholarship aimed at women students from all over Mexico, *'in order to promote equal opportunities and strengthen the leadership of Mexican women in gastronomy'* (Reygadas, s.d.).

Related to the communal function of the RBs, Café Naranja helps the queer community by hiring queer staff and collaborating with a queer shelter that receives teens who left home. Another business that has collaborations with charity, is Restaurante La Charola, by Elena. They cater gala dinners to raise money. Being engaged with the community in the form of *'social entrepreneurship'* is also part of the framework of Bullough et al. (2021). At the same time, Ferriman et al. (2009) states that women entrepreneurs are communal, which is in line with the community creating aspect of the social bakery La Adelita.

An event that is key to mention in the context of these female entrepreneurs, is the Women's March in Mexico City. Every International Women's Day. Every March 8, an enormous protest march takes place in the city. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, there is a women's strike. During the interviews, two women mentioned participating in the march and strike. In La Adelita, women gather in the morning of March 8 to prepare for the march. This activity relates to their meaning. Also Elisa shared that they close every 9<sup>th</sup> of March, and that she takes over the Instagram page of Café Naranja during the march at March 8<sup>th</sup>, as she values that the experience of the march is shared to the public.

To give an answer to the question that is central in this section: *How are the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City embedded in its socio-cultural, entrepreneurial and spatial context?*

In terms of the embeddedness of the practices of the ROs in the context, multiple conclusions can be drawn. First of all, the concepts of socio-cultural, entrepreneurial and spatial context are reviewed to one concept: the embeddedness. Secondly, practices of ROs are adjusted to its' context in the form of altered opening times due to safety concerns. The example of La Adelita in section 4.6.2 illustrates how meaning and safety concerns shape business practices, creating a cycle where the context of Mexico City both necessitates and restricts the functioning of women-led businesses; limiting the business to grow. Other hindrances that female ROs in Mexico City face are prejudices by suppliers, contractors and even employees, mostly when female ROs are together with their male business partners. These prejudices are all related to the traditional gender roles, referred to as *'women belong in the kitchen'* in section 4.6.3. In the rural area of Mexico the traditional gender roles are still present, as explained by Elisa. Mexico City is considered to be more open, but role incongruity is still experienced by the ROs; for example by Rita, as explained in section 4.6.3. Despite these systemic challenges for female ROs in Mexico City, the women use their position to create supportive work environments for the people they employ; and advocate for social change and gender equality through the participation in events as the Women's March and Women's Strike in March. Finally, the win of Elena Reygadas has a role model function for the ROs, related to Ferriman et al. (2009).

## 5. Conclusions and discussion

*“I’m a cook in the middle of the world’s largest, most complex and most diverse metropolis, which has an incredible richness in its culture and gastronomy. As a chef, I feel that I’m a product of all that”* (Reygadas, as cited in Sgarbi, 2023).

With this quote the thesis research was introduced in chapter 1. Referring back to this speech by chef Elena Reygadas, she feels that she is a product of her city and its culture and gastronomy – Mexico City. Taking a similar approach in this research, it has been studied what factors affect the practices of female ROs in Mexico City, or in other words: what influences the actions that they perform?

The aim of this research has been to map the daily practices of female ROs, in order for this research to serve as a starting point to explore ways in which women leadership in restaurants can be promoted. The findings of this research can be considered to be an illustrative research to give an insight in the daily routines of female restaurant owners in Mexico City, and explore what factors influence their practices.

The overarching research question in this research has been: *What factors influence the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?*

In section 5.1 the answer to this research question will be formulated, reviewing the research questions that have been answered in chapter 4. In section 5.2 the research limitations and recommendations for future research will be given. Lastly, section 5.3 sheds a light on the research implications of this thesis research, and the way that the findings of this research can contribute to society in the form of policy recommendations.

## 5.1. Answering the research question

The main research question that was posed at the start of this research was:

*What factors influence the practices of female restaurant owners in Mexico City?*

Following the framework of zooming in and zooming out (Nicolini, 2009), the practices of eight female ROs have been analysed; not only resulting in an overview of daily practices of the entrepreneurs, but also showing the interdependency of practices and the context in which they are embedded.

When summarising the daily practices of female ROs in Mexico City, it can be stated that motivation plays a significant role in the practices of the ROs, as it makes the ROs to be present at their business almost every day. Not all ROs started their business with an initial dream to start a restaurant, but they highly value the idea of being able to employ people, and to be their own boss. Being in line with research by Seligmann (2002), family is an important actor in the network of the ROs. Moreover, the ROs practiced nurturing, caregiving and compassionate behaviour and leading styles, being in line with findings by Yoder (2001) and Ferriman et al. (2009).

Concluding the factors that influence the practices of ROs in Mexico City, it can be concluded that team, safety concerns and motivation are the three factors that mostly influence the practices of female ROs in Mexico City. Just as all practices are intertwined, these three factors show interrelations as well. Having a business that sustains people and being a good boss for those people has been a motivation to start the business for the majority of the women in this research. At the same time, all entrepreneurs shared that they valued their employees the most, when thinking about their business. This shows that the factors team and motivation are related. At the same time, this relation is connected to the embeddedness of the business in the RI context, as the ROs mention that they want to give their employees a better working environment than they have heard of (or experienced themselves) in other RBs. However, At the same time, the context is holding back the women from improving their context; as portrayed by the hindrances that La Adelita face with regards to their opening times, as shown in section 4.6.2.

In terms of barriers in the industry, women ROs experience gender biases in the form of role incongruity. Furthermore, women ROs face prejudices by suppliers, mostly when women are together with their male business partner. Opportunities for women are based upon their

With regards to practice theory, the notion that practices are in constant development (Shove et al., 2012) is confirmed in section 4.5 through zooming in; concluding that every change in the practice bundle influences other practices. As explored in section 4.5, practice elements that build up the practices - which are in practice bundles, are all interdependent and alter when an change takes place in one of the 'building blocks'. This applies to alterations in the materiality in the context of the practice (section 4.2.1); the dependency of practices on materiality (section 4.2.2) and the way in which leadership ideas (meaning) are practiced (section 4.2.3).

An unexpected outcome of this research has been the influence of social media on the daily routines of the ROs. Social media engagement has been an emergent theme when discussing the practices of the entrepreneurs, and had not been included in the research methods for this study. However social media engagement has developed into being an integral part of restaurant management for the women ROs in Mexico City.

Another outcome that was not expected in the set-up of the conceptual model was the conceptualization of the context of Mexico City. All factors that affect the practices of the ROs cannot be put under a definition of solely the entrepreneurial environment, spatial and socio-cultural context; as they have been conceptualised in the conceptual model in section 2.5. The entrepreneurial environment, spatial and socio-cultural context will all be referred to as the embeddedness of the owner and the establishment.

Drawing conclusions in terms of the theoretical framework, it can be stated that the use of a feminist lens has led this research to find the gender based discrimination and hinders that the women ROs experience; as shown by the opening times of La Adelita in section 4.6.2 and role incongruity in section 4.6.3. Without this feminist framework, these gender barriers would not have been brought to light. Therefore, the gender approach in this research can be concluded to be essential. However, the feminist theory in combination with the embeddedness of the practices, and the notion of zooming in and zooming out, has been considered to be too complex. This notion will be elaborated on further in section 5.2.

## 5.2 Research limitations and future research

The conceptual model that was developed at the start of this research is portrayed in figure 5.1 underneath. In this research, practice theory has been combined with feminist theory, creating a framework in which Shove et al.'s practice theory framework has been used in the embeddedness of the individual; following Anderson (1996).

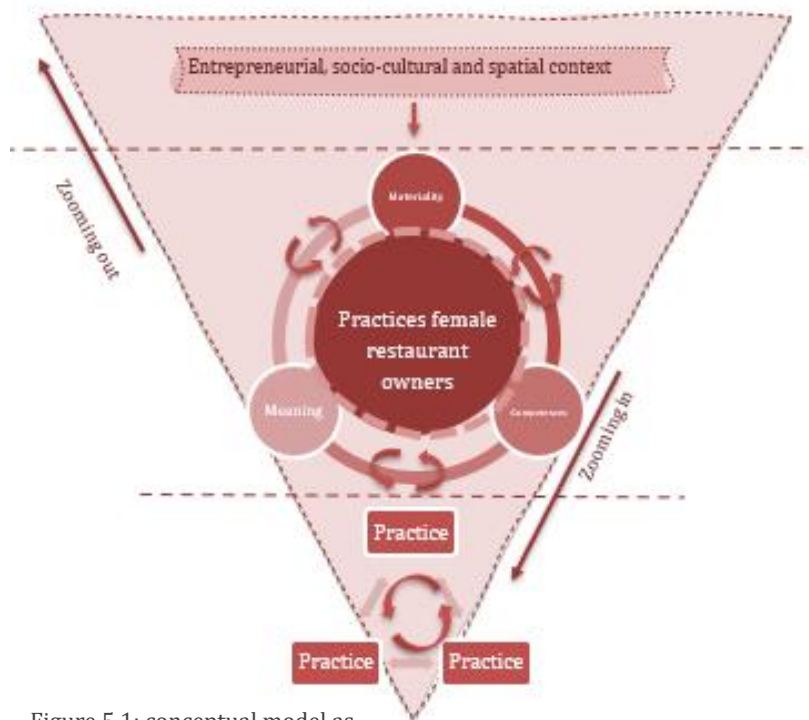


Figure 5.1: conceptual model as developed in chapter 2

With regards to the theoretical approach of this research, practice theory has been a suitable framework to explore the daily routines of female ROs, just as it is generally considered to be a fitting research framework for social human practices (Shove et al., 2012). When conducting the fieldwork, the Shove's elements of meaning, material and competences helped me to structure the different elements that are involved with running a RB, such as the team and the establishment. Taking into consideration the embeddedness of the practices has been a necessary and crucial element in this research, but working with this notion has been confusing at times. The framework of Shove et al. (2012) includes material, meaning and competences in one practice, but the definition of the location of this practice has considered to be unclear. In order to clarify the relations between practices, it was chosen to combine the theory of Shove et al. (2012) with the notion of practice-arrangement bundles by Schatzki (2019); leading to the complex 'running a restaurant business'. It was expected that this conceptualisation would make the concept of zooming in and zooming out more clear; with focusing on practice bundles while zooming in, and focusing on the context of the complex while zooming out.

However, with the addition of the notion of embeddedness, the unravelling of the factors that influence the practices of female ROs was made even more complex, as it was hard to distinguish what was part of other practices in the practice bundle, and what entities were part of the embeddedness. This is clearly portrayed by the example of social media engagement in section 4.5.1. Are social media platforms part of the material, or part of the context? Distinguishing the practices and their elements from the context has considered to be confusing;

As it has been hard to define these different entities, using this combination framework of Anderson's embeddedness (1996) and the notion of zooming in and zooming out (Nicolini, 2009) can concluded not to be as effective. Reflecting back on the framework that has been used in this thesis research, the following framework is expected to gain insight in the practices more clearly, portrayed in figure 5.2.

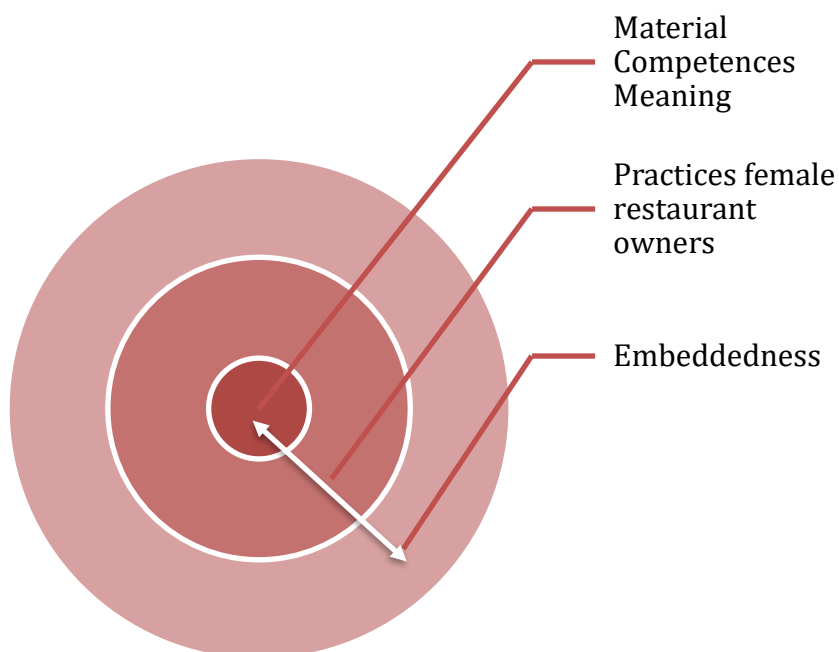


Figure 5.2: reviewed conceptual model for practice theory research

In this framework, it is recommended to look at the practices of female ROs by the way they are built up, and then put those practices in relation to the embeddedness. This embeddedness is defined as the context of the practices. The general approach is similar to the approach that has been used in this research, but this model is illustrated more clearly; showing the way in which elements, material and competences are embedded in the practices, which are embedded in the context. Therefore, this model shows how all elements are interrelated.

In this research it has been chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews with eight female ROs. The limitations of the researcher being an intern that leads the program and the positionality, has been discussed in section 3.3. In this chapter the consequences of this positionality on the results and the way in which the interviews have been conducted in this research will be discussed.

First of all, gender-related topics were discussed with the female ROs. Reflecting on my positionality as a woman in this research, having the same gender as the respondents has had the consequence that the ROs were aware of the similar experiences that we – as women – have in society. During all interviews, the women mentioned small phrases of confirmation after the discussion of certain experiences, such as *‘¿sabes?’*, meaning *‘you know?’*, stating that I could recognize their struggles as a woman too. This position did create a feeling of bonding over the ‘general’ experiences as a woman, however, reconsidering my position as a Dutch woman in Mexico City, consequently did frame the outcomes of this research. Due to prior experience in the restaurant industry, reading the results of *A Fine Line* (2018) and a feminist worldview as a person, it is inevitable that my position as a researcher has been biased. Some statements might not have been judged to be as critical by the ROs, but have been biased by how I experienced them to be. Consequently, the outcomes of this research might not be the outcomes that the women ROs themselves might have given when discussing gender and the restaurant industry, but the conclusions are drawn by a researcher with a feminist and critical frame.

Secondly, six of the eight participants were present at the first reunion at the office or at one or more of the visits for the internship project; and therefore I had met in person before visiting them for the interview. Two ROs I had not met before doing the interview. Looking at the way the conversations with them went in comparison with the women I had met before conducting the interview, I do not think the results are influenced by the fact that there were less contact moments with those two ROs in comparison with the other ROs.

Reflecting back on the interviews, language might have been an influencing factor in this research. As discussed in chapter 4, two interviews have been conducted in English and three interviews have been conducted in Spanish. Another three interviews have been held in a combination of Spanish and English - mostly starting in Spanish, after which the RO changed to English after I asked to clarify a Spanish word, for example. In terms of data collection, all questions that were planned to ask in the interview guide have been asked and answered in all interviews, both being held in Spanish and/or English. However, the interviews that were conducted in English had a consequence that I understood the women slightly better, allowing me to ask more probing questions and therefore gain more insight. Even though the interviews that were conducted in English might have given me a better understanding as a researcher, it does not necessarily mean that it would have been better to conduct all interviews in English. As my understanding of the Spanish language was relatively good and I was given the opportunity to ask for clarifications, I made sure that the ROs could talk about their experiences in their mother tongue and therefore express themselves fully. One possible consequence of this can be that they made use of easier Spanish in order for me to understand it, or they might have avoided certain terms and therefore topics might have been missed touching upon.

Not only by language this might have been the case, also in terms of location of the interview. Seven of the eight interviews were conducted at the RB of the entrepreneur. One interview has been conducted in a book shop café, as the participant preferred to do the interview outside of her workplace. After this interview, the participant told me that she saw the interview almost as a moment of reflection, being held at the end of the year, and talking about her values and norms. We touched upon many topics related to her daily and entrepreneurial life, giving her the opportunity to open up about everything. The fact that the interview was not located at her business might have contributed to this feeling. Apart from this interview, all interviews took place at the business of the RO; some while being full with guests and close to an employee, one in a separate office and others on a quiet weekday morning with a handful of guests and employees. The choice to do the interviews in the working environment of the RO had the consequence that all of the interviews were once or multiple times interrupted by guests entering or employees approaching. Even though these moments are in fact interruptions of the interview that was conducted, all of these moments were actually giving a broader insight in the practices of the ROs. Referring to the vignette about Carmen in section 4.1 for example, where the interview location had the consequence that I could see and feel how the news of closing the restaurant the next day was spread among the team, and their confused and happy reactions to it. Carmen told me that her team is *'like a family'* and they spend much time together, and being at Los Raíces for the interview allowed me to see how they were planning another night of going out that evening, practising the feeling of kinship that Carmen had told me about.

Added up to limited size of the research sample, is that - even though all being selected for the same program - the ROs in this study were all owners of a broad variety of restaurant business types, and ranging in size from six to twenty four employees. The RBs varied from being a social bakery to a chic and relatively highly priced restaurant. These differences have the consequence that daily routines vary, such as making bread or preparing meals, but also working hours to be different. However, themes as the way the ROs value their employees, motivation and support networks are not expected to be affected by this difference.

Building upon the notion that this research has done research to various types of RBs, possible future research might choose to specify their research sample to social bakeries, high end restaurants or cafés only, instead of this broader selection of RB types. An example would be research on bakeries with female workers in areas with safety concerns. Where La Adelita adjusts their opening hours to the unsafe context of Mexico City, further research could gain more insight into ways in which bakery owners cope with safety concerns during those hours.

Next to this difference in business type, the female entrepreneurs had different perceptions regarding feminism. La Adelita is very involved with topics such as gender violence and feminism, whereas Lorena called herself *'not to be a feminist'*. As a researcher however, I did notice that she might not feel as actively engaged in the topic, but she does counter gender inequality by her practices. As different types of RBs lead to different practices, this also means that the conclusions drawn in this research cannot be generalised to all women-led RBs of its particular sort; being social bakeries or cafés for example.

Furthermore, explorative research on multiple female stakeholders in the restaurant industry is suggested, especially on women suppliers. As discussed by the ROs in this research, there are little to no female product suppliers. Therefore, further research can be done to investigate the position of female supplies in the industry, opportunities and possible hinders that they encounter and motivations for them to do this work. The same applies to female employees for example, by

identifying how female employees feel about the e-mail address that Lorena had set up for example.

As discussed by all ROs in this study, there were little to no female product suppliers for example. Further research could investigate the way they are positioned within the male dominated environment of the food supply industry in Mexico City and/or other locations. All of the ROs mentioned that they retrieved their products from Mercado Central de Abastos, the main food supplier market in Mexico City, and said to be the biggest food wholesale market in the world. During my internship period in Mexico City, I also researched the role of gender on markets in Mexico City, as part of the Market Cities Network project. In this project, it has already been brought to light that Mercado Central de Abastos aims at gaining social inclusivity (CEDA, 2024), but it is unclear if this relates to gender equity in the market itself as well. Being the main food market in the city, further research to the position of women on the market is required. Other than using practice theory to study the practices of women suppliers to gain insight experiences, the role of gender in the industry can also be studied by applying relational theory to different actors in the industry. This theory can be used to discover in what ways actors are related and how gender (inequality?) is embedded in this network of food distribution and restaurant businesses.

In this research it has been portrayed that the embeddedness of the restaurants is an interrelation of multiple actors, and that all contexts and practices are related. This particular study to the practices of female ROs can be used as a starting point for further research to the context of the businesses, aiming to elaborate on the policies regarding female entrepreneurship and interviewing policy makers about possible follow-up researches to the topic. Another suggestion for further research is related to the unexpected influence of social media on the practices of female ROs. In order to gain more insight on the context of the restaurants, it is essential to study the influence of social media engagement on the restaurant industry. How does the phenomenon of *'going viral'*, as discussed in 4.5.1, influence the sales of RBs? Data on sales numbers and marketing tools as social media views will be a valuable extension to the findings of this research.

### 5.3 Research implications and policy recommendations

Taking into consideration the research limitations that have been shared, and keeping in mind the notes for future research that have been discussed in the previous section, this section aims to position the findings of this study in science and society. Firstly, the contribution to science will be discussed, reflecting upon the scientific relevance in section 1.2. Thoughts on the societal relevance (section 1.1) will be shared in the closing paragraphs of this research paper, suggesting how the findings of this study can be brought to practice through recommendations for policy.

In terms of theoretical research implications and scientific relevance, this research has been a qualitative study on the practices of female restaurant owners, studying what factors affect these practices and how these practices are related to the context. By the use of a practice theory approach, a detailed description of the three elements material, meaning and competences have been given. By having researched this variety of cases - being cafés, restaurants and bakeries - different practices have been brought to light. This can be seen as a positive contribution to the existing knowledge in the field of women-led RBs.

Furthermore, the framework of Bullough et al. (2021) could often be applied to the women in this research, mostly related to the entrepreneurs being nurturing, caregiving and compassionate (Yoder, 2001; Ferriman et al., 2009). These characteristics might be related to the fact that this research sample of ROs consisted of businesses that contribute to community – as that was one of the key elements of taking part in the program. Women leaders being communal (Ferriman, 2009) can therefore be linked to this. In their daily practices, the women experienced biases by suppliers, male contractors that renovated the RB, and sometimes even employees. The ROs experienced prejudices that they would not have knowledge about topics that were considered ‘male’, such as building jobs. Leading the men to talk to the male business partner of the female ROs. At the same time – opposing this idea of having *no* knowledge – female ROs also experienced that people thought they had *too much* knowledge, or were ‘too direct’ or ‘too assertive’, which were not expected of a woman leader. This role incongruity took place in practices related to the RB and in practices beyond and leads to discrimination – as shown by the situation at the old work of Rita. Affirming the fact that women are facing barriers in leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002), policy actions are desired to break down the barriers that hinder women in higher positions because of their gender. Gender quota for high positions can be a recommendation for this, but eventually a cultural shift is needed.

Referring to the position of this study in societal context, this study contributes to the understanding of the position of female entrepreneurs. The policy recommendations that will be discussed in this section build upon the predicted social relevance of this research: gaining insight in the practices of women entrepreneurs in Mexico City. During the interviews, the ROs shared that they were interested in meeting the other entrepreneurs, leading to a reunion with all of the ROs of this study. Therefore, one practical outcome of the research is that a group of women has connected over their businesses, coming together during a reunion, and planning on seeing each other more often. In terms of ‘tangibility’, an online group has been created with all of these women, giving them the opportunity to invite each other for activities and share experiences. By exchanging experiences and advice, this group of women can support each other as entrepreneurs, and the people they reach and employ. As the ROs mentioned that they were keen on meeting each other and sharing experiences, support groups for women in the restaurant business can be set up; for example by the union of restaurant owners in the city – in Mexico City, and everywhere else. In this way, the ROs can help and support each other considering work laws and other work-related practicalities. Moreover, these groups can be used to share experiences.

In terms of supporting women entrepreneurs, economic capital helps women in their business. Reflecting upon the program, the entry barriers to be able to enter the program were strict and considered to be very modern. As portrayed in table 3.1, the average age of women that participated in this program was young, which can be a consequence of the entry barriers that were put by American Express. With RBs needing a social media account to be able to participate, older generations are more likely to be excluded, as those generations are generally less active on those platforms. However – as portrayed by the social media influence in section 4.5.1 – RBs that are not involved on social media, are less likely to receive new guests. Therefore, these RBs might be the RBs that need those grants the most.

Related to this is, is the way in which economic capital may specifically help women, with a connection to gender related violence. In section 4.2.3 it is not portrayed how money can help a business grow, but is showed how a lack of funding hinders a business from growing. In this case, this is all based on gender, as unsafe situations during the night have the consequence that security during the night is required. Due to insufficient economic capital, this expense is impossible do, having the result that the bakery does not open till 12 in the afternoon; failing potential clientele in the morning – and therefore missing potential income to grow the business.

In this particular situation of a feminist social bakery, social security during night hours can help the bakery to open earlier and gain more economic capital. Making sure that bakeries such as La Adelita have a safe working environment during the night can make a huge difference, as shown in the interdependency of practices in this study. La Adelita - a social enterprise that aims to create community within women that have countered gender based violence - is hindered in their operation due to this particular gender based violence. Action is needed to make sure that enterprises such as La Adelita can survive and focus on their goal to help women, instead of adjusting their operation to the embeddedness of their establishment. Being aware that gender based violence is an enormous problem that is not solved by one particular measure, it is still important that action is undertaken. The municipality and police must engage in making areas safer by practicing more routine patrols in zones that are unsafe, or by making sure more supervision is present at public transport hubs. In this way, women are hopefully able to get to their work safe, and they can practice their jobs – it being at a bakery or restaurant, or any other location.

Eventually, the objective is for all women to run a business without having to worry about safety concerns, so that they can put their energy and effort in the practices that they enjoy most: leading their team and preparing food.

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## Attachment 1: interviewguide

### **Interviewguide**

Semi structured interview

#### **Topics (in order of interview)**

General/opening questions:

- What is the thing you are most proud of in your restaurant

Practices:

- Meaning
- Competence
- Material

Space for community:

- Accessibility
- Activities
- Comfortable
- Sociable

Gender:

- Context Mexico
- Context restaurant entrepreneurship

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Subtopic</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Probing questions</b>
<b>General information/opening questions</b>	<i>The restaurant holder</i>	Age, for how long in Mexico City, city/country of origin, business partner or alone. How many people work at the restaurant.	<i>Could you tell me more about this process?</i>
		When did you open the restaurant?	
		Why did you open the restaurant?	
	<i>The restaurant</i>	Could you tell/show me what you are most proud of in your restaurant?	
		How would you describe your restaurant in 3 words?	
<b>Practices</b>	<i>Meaning</i>	With what ideal in mind did you start the restaurant?	<i>Do you have a story about the restaurant that makes you happy? For example an experience with a guest, or an activity that happened here?</i>
		Could you tell me how a regular working day looks like for you?	
		Which people are most important to your restaurant according to you?	
	<i>Competence</i>	Could you tell me how you became a restaurant holder?	<i>Which people do you encounter on a working day?</i>
		How did you encounter your employees?	
	<i>Materiality</i>	What do you think of the accessibility of financial help – such as BSIR to female restaurant holders?	<i>And why?</i>
		Can you tell me more about your restaurant building?	
		How do you retrieve your alimentary products that you use for cooking?	
	<i>Context Mexico City</i>	<i>Competence</i>	Could you tell me how you became a restaurant holder?
How did you encounter your employees?			
<i>Materiality</i>	<i>Materiality</i>	What do you think of the accessibility of financial help – such as BSIR to female restaurant holders?	<i>What do you value most in your employees?</i>
		Can you tell me more about your restaurant building?	
		How do you retrieve your alimentary products that you use for cooking?	
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Context Mexico City</i>	In general, how do you experience Mexico City	

		as a city to live and work? More specific, how do you experience Mexico City as a woman?	
	<i>Context female restaurant entrepreneurship</i>	How would you describe the field of restaurant entrepreneurship for women?	<i>Are there any difficulties you encounter? And any opportunities for women?</i>
		Do you know other female restaurant holders?	<i>Is there some sort of community/support?</i>
<b>Space for community</b>	<i>Accessibility</i>	To what extent is the accessibility of the restaurant important in your eyes?	<i>What do you do, to make the restaurant accessible? Physically and socially?</i>
	<i>Activities</i>	To what extent are activities important in your restaurant according to you?	<i>Do you organise activities in the restaurant? What kind of activities? How are these activities announced?</i>
	<i>Comfortable space</i>	To what extent is it important for you that your restaurant is a comfortable space?	<i>What do you do to make your restaurant a comfortable place?</i>
	<i>Sociable</i>	Do you have any regular guests in your restaurant?	<i>To what extent do these guests contribute to your restaurant?</i>
<b>Closing questions</b>		Are there any experiences you wish to tell, topics we haven't discussed yet? During earlier conversations with restaurant holders I understood that people would like to have some sort of community. For this research I am talking to multiple female restaurant holders. Would you be interested in getting into touch with other female restaurant holders in Mexico City?	

<b>Tema</b>	<b>Subtema</b>	<b>Pregunta</b>	<b>Preguntas de sondeo</b>
<b>Preguntas generales</b>	<i>Dueña</i>	Edad, tiempo en CDMX, ciudad/país de origina, business partner o sola, cuantos empleadores	<i>¿Cómo fue este proceso?</i>
		¿Cuándo abrió el restaurante?	
		¿Por qué abrió el restaurante?	
	<i>El restaurante</i>	¿Podrías decirme/mostrarme de qué se siente más orgulloso en su restaurante?	
		¿Cómo describirías tu restaurante en 3 palabras?	
<b>Prácticas</b>	<i>Meaning</i>	¿Con qué ideal inició el restaurante?	<i>¿Tienes alguna historia sobre el restaurante que te haga feliz? Por ejemplo, ¿una experiencia con un cliente o una actividad que haya tenido lugar aquí?</i>
		¿Podrías explicarme cómo es un día normal de trabajo para usted?	<i>¿Qué personas te encuentras en un día de trabajo?</i>
	<i>Competence</i>	¿Podrías decirme cómo llegó a ser titular de un restaurante?	<i>¿Siempre quiso tener su propio restaurante? ¿Realizó algún tipo de educación relacionada con la propiedad de un restaurante? ¿Qué es lo que más valora de sus empleados?</i>
		¿Cómo conoció a sus empleados?	
	<i>Materiality</i>	¿Qué opinas de la accesibilidad de la ayuda financiera -como el BSIR- a las mujeres titulares de restaurantes?	<i>¿Cómo recuperó su equipo?</i>
		¿Puedes contarme algo más sobre el edificio de su restaurante?	
		¿Cómo recupera los productos que utiliza?	
	<b>Gender</b>	<i>Context Mexico City</i>	En general, ¿cómo vive y trabaja en Ciudad de México?
Más específicamente, ¿cómo experimenta la Ciudad de México como mujer?			
<i>Context female restaurant entrepreneurship</i>		¿Cómo describiría el ámbito del empresariado restaurantero para las mujeres?	<i>¿Existen dificultades? ¿Y oportunidades para las mujeres?</i>
		¿Conoce a otras mujeres propietarias de restaurantes?	<i>¿Existe algún tipo de comunidad/apoyo?</i>
<b>Space for community</b>	<i>Accessibility</i>	En su opinión, ¿hasta qué punto es importante tener un lugar acesible?	<i>¿Qué haces para que el restaurante sea accesible? ¿Física y socialmente?</i>
	<i>Activities</i>	En tu opinión, ¿hasta qué punto son importantes las actividades en su restaurante?	<i>Organises actividades en tu restaurante? Qué tipo de actividades? ¿Cómo se anuncian estas actividades?</i>

	<i>Comfortable space</i>	¿Hasta qué punto es importante para usted que su restaurante sea un espacio cómodo?	¿Qué haces para que su restaurante sea un lugar cómodo?
	<i>Sociable</i>	Tienes clientes habituales en el restaurante?	
<b>Closing questions</b>		<p>¿Hay alguna experiencia que desee contar, algún tema que no hayamos tratado todavía?</p> <p>En conversaciones anteriores con propietarias de restaurantes me di cuenta de que a la gente le gustaría tener algún tipo de comunidad. Para esta investigación estoy hablando con varias mujeres propietarias de restaurantes. ¿Te interesaría ponerte en contacto con otras restauranteras de la Ciudad de México?</p>	

## Attachment 2: reunion December 19<sup>th</sup>

### Reunion December 19th

It is the week before Christmas, December 19 at 10am, when the reunion with all participants takes place. Lorena has invited us all to meet in Restaurante Coyo. It is around 11:45 am when the first woman arrives, and one by one all 5 women who had agreed to come arrive at Coyo. Unfortunately, Carmen has to cancel because 2 employees did not arrive at work, and Raquel sends a voice memo that she is ill and cannot join. Lorena comes in and tells me that she had a 'posada' with her team the evening before, which is a typical Mexican Christmas celebration. When entering the restaurant, María jokes that we - restaurant owners - never have any problems. During the meeting she would be called multiple times, as products were purchased. The conversation touches upon food bloggers, winning the grant and not having children. None of the women that were at the meeting had children - 'where should I get the time?' At 11am, Rita had to enter a phone call, as she had an online meeting with a supplier. She had been awake since 3am, the week being one of the busiest weeks of the year. The café of Elisa is closed for 2 weeks, as the terrace will be rebuilt with the money that they had won with the grant. Apart from her, everyone has lots of work during this week before Christmas. At around 1pm, all women return to their restaurants one by one again, and are very enthusiastic to have met each other. A few weeks later, messages are sent in the chat to wish each other a happy new year, and the proposal to meet another time in the new year.



## Attachment 3: the codebook

Code	Code Group 1	Code Group 2	Code Group 3	Code Group 4	Code Group 5
Ability is important	Competences				
Activities			Female entrepreneurship		
Activities for quiet days	Competences		Female entrepreneurship		
Adapting to demand	Competences				
Adjustment to context Mexico City		Embeddedness			
Administrative role	Competences				
Always wanted to open a restaurant					Meanings
Assertive			Female entrepreneurship		
Avoiding talking			Female entrepreneurship		
Bad experience in the industry		Embeddedness			
Balancing social life and business			Female entrepreneurship		
Being able to employ people as aspiration					Meanings
Being our own boss as goal			Female entrepreneurship		Meanings
Big trust in team	Competences				
Building community			Female entrepreneurship		
Buyer who buys products				Material	
Capacities leader	Competences		Female entrepreneurship		
Capital				Material	
Characteristics women in the industry	Competences				
Checking employees	Competences				
Collaborations			Female entrepreneurship		
Committed to project			Female entrepreneurship		
Community within women in the industry		Embeddedness			
Competences	Competences				
Compliments children					Meanings
Consideration of class		Embeddedness			
Context as a woman		Embeddedness			
Context Mexico		Embeddedness			
Cooking as passion	Competences				Meanings
Courses	Competences				
Day-to-day			Female entrepreneurship		
Delegating tasks to team	Competences				
Desire to help women					Meanings
Different treatment partner and me		Embeddedness			
Difficulties		Embeddedness			
Difficulties depend on person		Embeddedness			
Elena		Embeddedness			
Employees since the beginning	Competences				
Employees via internet	Competences				

Employees via other employees	Competences				
Empreneurial context Mexico		Embeddedness			
Encountering employees	Competences				
Enjoying developing and researching					Meanings
Entrepreneurship			Female entrepreneurship		
Equipment				Material	
Establishment				Material	
Experience as waitress	Competences				
Experience gender		Embeddedness			
Experience in managing	Competences				
Experience in the field		Embeddedness			
Experience was woman					
Experiencing violence in Mexico		Embeddedness			
Family embeddednes					
Family embeddedness			Female entrepreneurship		
Family network			Female entrepreneurship		
Food as objective					Meanings
Food industry		Embeddedness			
Food industry context Mexico City		Embeddedness			
Freedom of choice					Meanings
Furniture				Material	
Future orientation			Female entrepreneurship		
Giving young people the chance					Meanings
Goal to be accessible					Meanings
Good relationship with owner establishment				Material	
Grant					
Handling communication	Competences				
Helping queer community as value					Meanings
Helping the people we touch					Meanings
Hiring employees	Competences				
Hospitality	Competences				
I am the person that pays supplier		Embeddedness			
Ideal					Meanings
Impact of social media		Embeddedness		Material	
Importance gestor				Material	
Importance regular guests			Female entrepreneurship		
Importance social media					
Importance team	Competences				
Independent			Female entrepreneurship		
Individual talents employees	Competences				
Industry has to change		Embeddedness			
Initial idea					Meanings
Interaction with client		Embeddedness			
Interaction with environment		Embeddedness			

Interior design				Material	
Interseccionalidad		Embeddedness			
Involved in food preparation	Competences				
Job creates freedom			Female entrepreneurship		
Know how of team	Competences				
Leadership	Competences		Female entrepreneurship		
Little experience in the field	Competences				
Looking for making impact			Female entrepreneurship		Meanings
Lots of opportunities in Mexico City		Embeddedness			
Love for location				Material	
Loves social aspect	Competences				Meanings
Macho environment		Embeddedness			
Maintaining relationships	Competences				
Male employee having problems with me being a woman		Embeddedness			
Male environment		Embeddedness			
Male industry		Embeddedness			
Male work relation having problems with me being a woman		Embeddedness			
Management practices	Competences		Female entrepreneurship		
Material				Material	
Meaning					Meanings
Mexican concept		Embeddedness			
Mexican traditions		Embeddedness			
Moving to Mexico City					Meanings
Negative impact Mexican government		Embeddedness			
Network					Meanings
Network of feminist organisations		Embeddedness			
No activities in restaurant		Embeddedness			
No established routine in daily life			Female entrepreneurship		
No experience in the industry	Competences				
No female pizzaria	Competences				
No light and electricity				Material	
No related education	Competences				
Nutrition as vision					Meanings
Offering safe space for employees					Meanings
Opportunities for women		Embeddedness			
Other job			Female entrepreneurship		
Pandemic created opportunity		Embeddedness			
Part of restaurant network		Embeddedness			
Partner has experience opening restaurants	Competences				
Partner involved in material side				Material	
Passion for developing projects					Meanings
Positive contribution team to atmosphere	Competences				

Power distance			Female entrepreneurship		
Practicalities opening a restaurant				Material	
Prejudices as a woman		Embeddedness			
Private events			Female entrepreneurship		
Privileged that I live closeby		Embeddedness			
Products				Material	
Project potential					Meanings
Proud					Meanings
Proud of being an entrepreneur					Meanings
Proud of development project					Meanings
Proud of personal development					Meanings
Proud of team	Competences				
Proud of the food	Competences				
Proud to be able to employ people			Female entrepreneurship		Meanings
Queer employees					Meanings
Recognition important business partners					Meanings
Regular day-to-day			Female entrepreneurship		
Regular guests					Meanings
Related education	Competences				
Risk aversion			Female entrepreneurship		
Safety		Embeddedness			
Seeing success					Meanings
Social aspect					Meanings
Social entrepreneurship			Female entrepreneurship		
Social media				Material	
Solving problems			Female entrepreneurship		
Some employees having problems with me being a woman		Embeddedness			
Space for innovation			Female entrepreneurship		
Stable operation			Female entrepreneurship		
Started as a joke					Meanings
Starting the project			Female entrepreneurship		
Storage				Material	
Strategy woman as owner			Female entrepreneurship		
Supplier pays			Female entrepreneurship		
Suppliers			Female entrepreneurship	Material	
Supportive of entrepreneurship			Female entrepreneurship		
Sustainability as vision					Meanings
Taking the risk			Female entrepreneurship		
Team and gender					Meanings
Team of paid employees and volunteers			Female entrepreneurship		

Traditional gender norms		Embeddedness			
Treating female employees		Embeddedness			
Uncertainty avoidance		Embeddedness	Female entrepreneurship		
Value					Meanings
Valueing employees	Competences				Meanings
Valueing regular clientes					Meanings
Vision					Meanings
Women in the industry		Embeddedness			
Women's strike		Embeddedness			