Chapter

Leadership Coaching to Drive Transformation in the Experience Economy

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Abstract

Coaching has been recognized as a valuable developmental approach in the field of leadership development, able to support aspiring leaders to attain their personal and professional goals, as well as support their teams in a rapidly changing, increasingly uncertain, and complex business environment. Coaching programs have the potential to support the creation of culture norms that can better support optimal working attitudes and behaviors, contributing to improved performance through evolved leadership capacity. However, the use of leadership coaching in the experience economy, and specifically the tourism and hospitality industries, is mostly unreported. In a case study of coaching tourism and hospitality managers and educators in Vietnam, the intentional change theory was used to support the development of coaching behaviors. The program learning evidence from a six-week long coaching program showed that those participants who aspire to become effective leaders can engage in coaching behaviors through leadership identity, engagement in intentional leadership development, and through more mindful and collaborative actions. This chapter presents a starting point for other "leader as coach" programs, advancing the field of evidence-based tourism and hospitality leadership development. Theoretical and practical implications are also discussed.

Keywords: coaching, leadership development, experience economy, intentional change theory, managerial coaching

1. Introduction

Coaching has attracted vast interest from leadership development scholars and practitioners over the past three decades, contributing to the leadership development field's scientific research base across different industry sectors [1]. Day [2] defined coaching as a goal-oriented experiential process aimed at the development of leadership skills to improve performance and organizational outcomes. Organizations in the experience economy, predominantly tourism and hospitality organizations that provide experiences rather than goods and services [3] and rely heavily on human and face-to-face interactions between customers and staff, are finding it increasingly challenging to attract, engage, and retain talented staff [4, 5]. In addition, tourism and hospitality organizations have been the most severely hit by the disruptive nature

of the COVID-19 pandemic [6]. Two and half years into the pandemic, many tourism and hospitality organizations now experience deep-rooted challenges associated with prolonged labor shortages and high turnover rates. The seasonal nature of tourism and hospitality jobs and low pay further add to these challenges [7]. Researchers highlighted that the lingering pandemic triggers business decisions that also lead to different organizational structures and how jobs are performed as consumer demand changes [6]. Since the reopening of global borders in 2021, employees are finding in the current tourism and hospitality workplace to do more with less, under more stringent policies, and also under elevated levels of stress and anxiety [6].

While most tourism and hospitality leadership literature advocates positive leadership styles and behaviors, such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, and empowering leadership [8], the changed and uncertain environment and under-resourced organizations, however, may make it increasingly challenging to apply these leadership styles and associated behaviors, specifically when managers work under a higher level of stress and anxiety for an extended period. The pressure to produce results may be paralyzing for many managers and front-line workers alike, debilitating any well-established high-performance work practices [9]. In such a context, stress may contribute to burnout, intention to leave, and high turnover [10]. It has been argued that changes that fundamentally affect members of society in a radical way may have profound effects on how individuals construct their identity and find meaning in life [11], potentially leading some individuals to question their future in the tourism and hospitality industries [12]. This has potentially devastating effects on the organizations from the human resource management standpoint as this may significantly compromise the organizational leadership capacity. Coaching managers for development in such a social context may therefore offer new solutions to deal with the challenges of modern times [11]. It is perhaps even more vital in the "new normal" to help managers undertake personal development that will assist in the reset to help reduce the overwhelm experienced by many in the workplace and to continue driving more sustainable human resources practices in their organizations.

This study refers to managerial coaching through which organizational managers could elevate their leadership skills and abilities. The aims of this study are to (i) explore how a coaching program designed for junior to mid-level managers can drive change in coached managers, and (ii) identify how and when the change occurred during the program. The question that directed this study is: How can coaching training support the development of managers, consequently supporting their efficacy to lead in the new normal? The study's purpose is influenced by the fact that the cultural norms in today's tourism and hospitality businesses and organizations have changed as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic and that there is a need for different and more effective leader development interventions, such as managerial coaching, to reduce the pain and friction associated with staff and labor shortages and turnover intention.

2. Coaching for managerial development

An early definition of coaching pointed to "unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them" ([13], p. 8). In this assertion, coaching was linked to individual's internal state, highlighting the importance of drawing one's focus to self-awareness and taking personal responsibility for change [13]. Other researchers stressed that coaching is a

distinct form of human development and different from other interventions driving change (e.g., counseling and mentoring) [14]. The coaching process is underlined by a dialog between the coach and the individual being coached, which is mostly one-on-one dialog, where the coach asks open questions, aiming to stimulate the coached individual's self-awareness and personal responsibility. Similarly, Stelter [11] suggested that coaching is "a form of dialogue [that] offers the coachee a space for self-reflection; for revising and refining positions and self-concepts" (p. 52). Overall, most definitions shed light on coaching as a process in which the coach and the coached individual engage in interpersonal interaction that leads to an exchange of knowledge and the development of insights, leading to growth. It is during this process that the coached individuals are supported by the coach to see themselves in a new light. Researchers stress that the coaching interpersonal interaction should be focused on the coached individual's goal [15], and the coaching dialogs need to support the achievement of the goal to foster positive behavioral change [16].

Coaching is seen as an attractive approach within the leadership development field as the demand for high-quality managers in the more uncertain business environment grows [17]. Increasingly, managers are expected to use a coaching style in their daily managerial practice [18, 19] and to support a collective development of an organizational coaching culture important for improved organizational outcomes [20]. McCarthy and Milner [21] argued that coaching in the organizational context can lead to employee engagement, improved performance, responsibility, and trust in the organizational context. Overall, coaching, as a form of development, has been perceived as an important and effective managerial activity as it can support the growth and performance of those being coached [22]. As highlighted in the literature, coaching has been studied in relation to organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction [23], service quality and turnover intention [24], and individual and organizational performance [25].

Weller and Weller [26] noted that coaching as an approach to leadership development is particularly valuable as the coaching intervention can be customized to the needs of different managers and the contexts within which the managers exist. In terms of managerial coaching, Hawkins and Smith [27] suggested four types of coaching directions to support others' growth and development—coaching for skills, coaching for performance, coaching for development, and coaching for transformation. However, despite the growing popularity of coaching in the organizational context, theoretically, the empirical evidence outlining how and why coaching leads to change in behaviors is limiting the advancement of the field [28, 29]. For example, the lack of underpinning theoretical coaching models and theories in coaching programs and interventions, such as managerial coaching, can lead to unjustified evidence and misconceptions of what is being developed, when and how. Previously, calls have been made to empirically investigate the elements that can predict effective coaching outcomes [26, 30]; the coaching antecedents (e.g., coaching and the coached individuals' characteristics); the coaching process (e.g., the coaching approach and the coaching relationship); and different levels of outcomes (e.g., individual, team, organizational) [31].

3. Intentional change theory

Intentional change theory is an integrated theory of change, unifying elements from leadership development, emotional and social intelligence, cognitive emotion,

social complexity, and psycho-neurobiology [32–35]. Intentional change theory was specifically developed for the leadership development field, as other theories of change could not effectively explain why a change occurred during a given leadership development intervention and how it could sustain the new behaviors over time, a phenomenon labeled as the "black box" [36].

According to intentional change theory [37], individuals who embark on an intentional journey of desired change need to achieve sustained change in their behavior, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, which requires an evolved progression through five vivid phases of discovery: (i) the ideal self, (ii) the real self, (iii) development of learning agenda and plan for intended change, (iv) experimentation and practice of new behaviors, thoughts, and feelings to move closer to the ideal self, and (v) the discovery derived from conversations with others during the learning process, leading to a noticeable change. Overall, the intentional change theory suggests that the enactment can enable behavioral change and progress through the delineated five phases of discovery, which are integral to finding oneself, who one is, and what is the ideal self that the individual wants to develop and rise to their purpose. Boyatzis [37] asserts this to be an iterative process of discovery as individual cycle through the different discovery phases in a nonlinear manner until the gap between the ideal self and real self is reduced.

During this developmental process, the coach's role is to meaningfully guide and support the coached individuals through the process of self-discovery, to awaken their drive, extrinsically and intrinsically, through coaching, questioning, and listening, consequently increasing the prospects of them being able to achieve sustainable behavioral change. For example, if managers' agenda is to use the coaching practice as a form of practice in their organization, these managers would need to engage in this coaching practice on a consistent and continuous basis. Boyatzis [38] stressed that an individual's internal motivation is, however, the key to one's intentional change, as others cannot force the change upon them. This suggests that only individuals who are committed to developing the needed qualities, such as traits, mindsets, and behaviors of effective managerial coaches, would be able to attain the desired change for longer. It is possible that less committed individuals may acquire such qualities, however, only for the short-term [36]. In other words, if the desire for sustained change is not present during the coaching development intervention, it may require friction for an individual to suddenly notice the need for intentional change [39].

Over the past 30 years, intentional change theory has been empirically tested and increasingly integrated into various professional and educational programs globally, including leadership development programs and coaching interventions [40]. While the extant intentional change theory research started to document some insights into how the model's five phases of discoveries can support the emergence of new behaviors—from the real self to the ideal self—more is to be done to fully explore the "black box" phenomenon. In addition, intentional change theory is yet to be applied in the experience-based context of tourism and hospitality interventions intended to foster managerial coaching. Specifically, in relation to managerial coaching, how can the theory support the effective development of junior and middle-level managers at this level of management?

4. The coaching approach

While suitable change theory such as the intentional change theory can inform the coaching intervention design, it is also necessary to apply a suitable coaching

approach to help propel the development of the coached individuals, so they are able to help others through their managerial coaching in their organizations. Boyatzis [33] suggested that intentional change theory can be used as the underpinning developmental theory driving leadership development interventions as well as a suitable model to guide the coaching intervention and process. In terms of the coaching process, the coach plays an important support role for the individual being coached to progress through the five intentional change theory phases. The coach's role is also to help reignite the coached individuals' will, through continuous discussions, to sustain their intended and desired managerial coaching change. Hence, the coaching approach also calls for a trusting and collaborative coaching relationship that could support the coached individual's sense of identity, as well as reinforce the coached individual's accountability for change, to reduce the potential for relapse [40]. In this sense, the coaching relationship and approach can be viewed as the key elements to the transformative process [41] as the coached individual engages in a reinterpretation of perceptions, experiences, and meaning-making [11]. It is the coach's facilitation capacity that helps trigger the change process through conversations, which consequently elicits the coached individual's shift in mindset or perspective. It is the coaching relationship, the rapport, collaboration, commitment, and the trust established between the coach and the coached individual—the psychological safety—that supports the coaching process and the development of the desired behavior [42].

Hence, coaching might be used as one of the approaches to foster leader development. The coach-coaching relationship and process can facilitate the intended behavioral change and goal attainment, such as optimal functioning, well-being, and improved personal and professional performance [41].

In terms of the coaching approach, several researchers suggested that an effective coaching approach consists of a designated yet flexible set of questions to enable the coached individuals to think for themselves, encouraging them to move toward their identified goals [43–45]. Hence, it is through the coach's questions, active listening, and continuous encouragement that the coached individual can engage in self-reflection, experimentation, and formation of plans to learn about the self, others, and the environment within which they exist. Thus, coaches expediate the learning process instead of giving advice [44].

Differently, Boyatzis et al. [46] suggested coaching for compassion, which requires a caring relationship between the coach and the coached individual. This type of relationship calls for both parties to be on the same emotional wavelength (e.g., feelings) and holds a commitment to each other [40]. Relationships with a greater level of trust, respect, and loyalty seem to add to the coaching benefits. Therefore, if coaches do not have a caring relationship with the coached individual, the coaching interactions may lead to added stress for the coach and the participant. To help sustain managers' energy and focus, organizations may consider coaching for compassion as an approach to organization's culture – culture where emotional intelligence is fostered through compassionate coaching. Compassion should be therefore incorporated in the leadership development interventions [40, 47].

Boyatzis [33] further discovered that compassionate coaching leads to more effective coaching outcomes than does coaching for compliance. Compassion in coaching was conceptualized as an understanding of the feelings of others, caring for the coached individual, and having the willingness to act in response to the coached individual's feelings [33]. Boyatzis and colleagues highlighted that coaching done with caring conviction about the individual's development in mind acts as the antidote for

stress as compassion in coaching can stimulate the psychophysiological response driving this state [33, 47]. Thus, it is important that coaches do not see the participants as a burden or responsibility and emphasize organizational reasons for coaching as this would escalate the coached individuals' stress levels and close the individuals to engage in learning and high performance [33].

During the coaching process, coaches use a wide range of tools and developmental techniques to help the coached individuals achieve their goals and improve their performance. For example, in the field of coaching psychology, researchers emphasize the use of psychological theories, approaches, and application of behavioral science to promote evidence-based practice in human-focused coaching development, aimed at the non-clinical population [48].

However, evidence-based managerial coaching insights are a few and still in their infancy [19, 49], which limits the understanding of how the mainstream coaching models and approaches contribute to coaching and performance outcomes, and specifically in the dynamic organizational context within the experience-based tourism and hospitality industries. Studying leadership coaching initiatives in the context of experience economy offers current and future tourism and hospitality organizations the opportunity to gain new insights into the relationship between managerial coaching and organizational outcomes. Whether and how such leadership development interventions can support the development of more sustainable human resource practices in the experience economy through managerial coaching and, subsequently, an organizational coaching culture. Hagen [29] suggested that to better understand managerial coaching, qualitative studies are needed, as so far, few quantitative studies have only shaded light on the relationship between managerial coaching and various outcomes. Little is also known about coaching in the eastern context, as most studies have been conducted in the US [18]. This chapter presents initial findings from a coaching program developed for tourism and hospitality managers and educators in managerial roles in Vietnam to foster their managerial coaching practice at a time the global economy started to open after the international border restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic were lifted in 2022.

5. The Australia-Vietnam coaching program

The Australian-Vietnam coaching program design was underpinned by intentional change theory. The program consisted of four learning modules and, along with the coaching approach, aligned with the intentional change theory model. The modules included content on "the ideal self," "the real self," "learning agenda," and "coaching" (with a leadership development coach and peer-coaching).

The once-a-week six-hour residential workshops of an overall six-week delivery were facilitated by an Australian faculty member and supported by one Vietnamese faculty member. The development was further supported with coaching sessions: a one-on-one coaching session with an Australian facilitator and a peer coaching session. The training was conducted in a trusting and supportive environment, underpinned by psychological safety and coach-peer-relationships that promoted participants' openness to learning and discoveries. Throughout the coaching program, participants were required to experiment and practice, and consequently reflect on their learning experiences, noting down any tipping points leading to new discoveries in behaviors, thoughts, or perceptions.

6. Method

The aim of this study was to conduct a preliminary assessment of the coaching program and its impact on behaviors developed by tourism and hospitality managers and educators through the six-week leadership coaching program underpinned by the intentional change theory and what and when contributed to the developed behaviors during the intervention. The coaching program contained the following topics-leadership styles, emotional intelligence, personal vision, values, and balance sheet, and coaching; and included the following methods: workshops (six one-day sessions); action learning reflections (participants reflecting on experimentation and practice in their workplaces—weekly individual and group reflections); and coaching (two sessions of 45 minutes).

The first one-on-one coaching interaction was between a female coach (also the Australian program facilitator, who was an experienced coach with an extensive background in leader and leadership development and organizational management). The second coaching session was a triad coaching interaction between the program participants – participants taking turns to coach, be coached, and act as observers and feedback providers. The one-on-one coaching session was built around the participants' personal vision—"the ideal self." The triad coaching was related to strengths identified during the coaching program and at the discretion of the coach and the coached participants.

6.1 Participants

Participants were tourism and hospitality professionals—junior to middle-level managers and educators—located in Vietnam who completed the Australia-Vietnam leadership development program funded by the Australian government as an initiative to upskill mostly female managers in the tourism and hospitality sectors in the "new normal." An Australian educational institution was selected to design and delivery the program for the Vietnamese context. All participants were interested in leadership and were required to undertake all learning components in English. Twenty participants engaged in the coaching intervention and volunteered to participate in the study. Among these participants, all completed reflective writing and 14 participants completed an end-of-program questionnaire. The final sample comprised 13 females and one male program participant; 8 participants were between 31 and 40 years, 5 between 20 and 30 and 1 between 41 and 50 years of age. Most participants (n = 11) had less than 5 years of management experience. Seven participants were from the tourism and hospitality education sector, and the other seven were employed by large tourism and hospitality organizations.

6.2 Procedure

Participants completed six one-day workshops with four key topics linked to coaching. These topics anchored the guided exploration and identification of the real and ideal self, identification of personal/ professional goals, and agenda for each participant's desired behavioral change. Consequently, all participants were scheduled for two coaching sessions. Each participant had the opportunity to discuss the ideal self with the coach and the agenda they had intentionally set for themselves to achieve in due course (post-program).

The data were collected from the participants' end-of-week individually written reflections and one end-of-program questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to assess the participants' coaching program experience and the extent of their coaching development—the perceived improvements and attainment of new behaviors—through open and closed questions. The study was approved by the institution's Human Research Ethics Committee.

6.3 Data analysis and findings

Weekly individually written reflections from all the coaching program participants (n = 20) and an end-of-program survey from 14 participants were analyzed. The reflections were linked to the weekly program content and the open-ended survey questions related to the participants' learning experiences, including what outcomes the participants perceived attaining at their individual level and in the context of their organizations. Themes were noted through thematic analysis, using a deductive approach [50, 51]. A deductive approach was used to create categories which the reflection-based and open-ended survey data were coded into, using themes linked to the intentional change theory [51].

The researcher first read all the documents to gain familiarity with the data. Next, the researcher started the coding process, coding data relevant to the research question, and the phases of the intentional change theory across the dataset. The codes were then reviewed, and similar codes were merged and, in the end, put into categories representing a given theme of the intentional change theory. An interpretation of data followed, capturing the meaning of how the participants gained insights from their classroom and workplace learning experiences, how the discoveries were processed and applied in their work and life, and the outcomes these actions contributed to by the time the program finished. The five themes that inform this study are ideal self-category, real self-category, learning agenda category, experimentation and practice category, supportive relationships category, and outcomes.

6.3.1 Ideal self-category

Throughout their lives, managers seek developmental opportunities to optimize their performance and help others to do the same in the organizational context. As managers pause from their busy working life and take the opportunity to visualize what their ideal self may look like over the next 5 years, it becomes evident that several goals appear on their list—a mix of personal and professional goals. Within this study, all participants noted that goals, in general, are helpful for performance but that it is harder to decide which goals to focus on at any one time. Having clarity on what goals to pursue emerged as the tipping point for the participants. For example, one participant says: "*[…] Before the program, I had lots of goals…I lived in chaos without direction for my career… during the program, I gradually found my direction… I had that 'Oh' moment that I should go this way… I can now organize all the things to focus on that I should follow*" (Participant 20). Indeed, the idea of a clear goal appears enlightening to most participants, as one participant says: "*[…] So many ideas running through my head… I can now narrow the lens and focus on my target*" (Participant 17). It becomes evident that having a clear goal for these participants also means a sudden surge of ideas that could potentially lead to ways of accomplishing their goals. Another participant also expresses that goal setting can lead to more purposeful

living: *"[...] It strengthens the ability to experience life, look forward, set a journey for the boat of my life, and be on the right track to the future with life values"* (Participant 12).

The participants' perceptions reveal that the coaching program, and specifically the one-on-one coaching experience, contributes to discoveries that lead to purposeful visions in which the future or the ideal self appears attainable. With coach's support and mindful questioning, the participants can figure out what to do to achieve their short- to long-term goals. However, it is not often the case in the Vietnamese context that managers are presented with a coaching opportunity to speak openly to a coach about their personal goals, struggles, and aspirations to lead in the post-COVID-19 era.

6.3.2 Real self-category

While many participants speak of their self-discoveries that contribute to understanding their current selves, there is an overwhelming perception that transformational and servant leadership behaviors frequently play out in their everyday lives. One participant says: *"[...] Through the result of transformational leadership, I realized that this type of leadership is the one I often apply in my job... servant leadership is also my favorite"* (Participant 11).

The analysis further uncovered the sub-theme of personal values. The participants realized that their values underscore their actions and behaviors. One participant expresses this idea by saying that: *"[...] developing my awareness of my values helped me to be true to my values, reducing conflict and making my work more enjoyable and fulfilling... It helps me to improve my leadership skills and to communicate with the team better. I will continue to develop my self-awareness to lead myself and others"* (Participant 20).

However, many more insights emerged through the work conducted in the area of emotional intelligence, another distinct sub-theme within this category. One participant expresses that leaders need to manage their emotions: *"interactions with colleagues can often be confusing, not to mention a source of stress. When you are a leader, you need to learn how to control your emotions in all cases in your workplace and your life"* (Participant 1). It is evident that most participants support the idea that managers can control their emotions during difficult times, as one participant says: *"I realized that when I'm angry or upset about something, I should not argue about it, I better go off somewhere, calm down and be prepared to agree or disagree and only then deal with it... I have a choice about whether I let these emotions take over or whether I lead a healthy life"* (Participant 2). Another participant also expresses similar sentiment and highlights how emotional intelligence leads to better social interactions: *"our openness to emotions and our ability to read our own and others' emotions can accurately give us important knowledge about how we are feeling whether we are communicating effectively and about the quality of our relationships"* (Participant 20).

The participants' reflective insights reveal that class activities, such as discussions around their leadership styles, values, and strengths, contribute to greater self-awareness, which further stimulates the thoughts and actions in their everyday lives. This illustrates how sustained reflective practice fostered through a training program can continue to elevate one's self-awareness and develop the ability to understand the real self through everyday experiences. However, this ability is reinforced through interpersonal feedback and supportive relationships as one cannot entirely rely on own personal beliefs [33].

6.3.3 Learning agenda category

The analysis indicates that the program activities linked to the exploration of the ideal and real self also set the base for the development of personal learning agenda—a specific plan developed by each participant to action their personally set goals. Indeed, most participants are driven by clearly defined goals, as one participant says that: "*[...] I gradually discovered and learned how to achieve my goal. What steps should I take first.... I know how to develop my learning agenda to align reality with my vision. The development not only helped me to clarify my vision, but also to find my direction*" (Participant 20).

Most participants are driven to embark on meaningful projects, either aligned to the opportunities in their current organization or the idea of starting a business. In either case, it is evident that all participants want to continue to grow as leaders and, in that process, also to grow their teams to achieve better performance and succeed on their projects. These participants appreciate their strengthened self-awareness, propelling their confidence to attain their aspired goals. One participant expresses this idea by saying: "*[...] I fully appreciate the value of self-awareness. With that, I can change and also see the change in my life*" (Participant 12).

6.3.4 Experimentation and practice category

The analysis further reveals that the sustained reflective practice presents meaningful insights into participants' experiences of how they take the opportunity to apply the learned concepts and methods in their daily working environments. Most participants seem preoccupied with challenging customer interactions and interactions involving their colleagues from other departments and their subordinates and managers at higher levels. This also represents the everyday working environment within the tourism and hospitality sectors, highlighting the significance of emotions in working life. It is noted that most participants experiment and practice their emotional self-control before leaning into conversations with others. As one participant states:

> "*[...] I hold back a moment to think carefully to make sure I will not say or do any impulsive thing. After that, I take time to review if I did well or what I should improve. So far, I evaluate myself that in most situations, my ability to control my anger is improved; I gradually become more patient with people and problems and do not let emotions overwhelm reason... I realized that in every situation, keeping calm is a must—"cold head and warm heart" is the key to overcoming a hard time*" (Participant 9).

In addition to trying to control their own emotions for personal benefit, most participants are also mindful of how their emotions impact their teams, as one participant says: "*[...] I realised that emotions could affect the team's spirit in working, so I must carefully use my words and commands*" (Participant 19).

Overall, the participants' reflective insights show how they continuously strived to experiment with different thoughts and behaviors as they started to feel more confident in doing so, including within their workplaces. Throughout the program, many participants try practice emotional intelligence, seeing it as the foundation for more effective individual and team performance. The participants continue to practice dealing with their work colleagues and customers to progress to their ideal level of

mastery. By the end of the coaching program, most participants express that they are "better able to perform their job tasks," are "more confident to show up as leaders" when at work, and overall, are "more interested in leadership."

6.3.5 Supportive relationship category

Coach support is perceived by several of the participants as a much-desired aspect of the training experience. The participants point to the coaching relationship, the interactions, questioning, and conversations as important triggers helping them to gain new insights and ideas and to realize their self-identified potential. Through the coaching support, the participants note they can better identify strategies to answer their own questions, and solve problems to their workplace issues and overall other challenges. The participants appreciate the coaching approach as it is unique and different from their prior experiences. Others could not lead them to meaningful insights and answers, only more confusion, making them question the coaching approach. The participants note that coaches need to be professional and able to work with the coached individuals' needs and understand their context rather than closing their motivation to change. One participant notes that:

> "[…] I think like the way the coaching session was done on the program, we were asked questions, but through these questions, we figured out by ourselves what we needed to do… But with some coaches, the quality is not there. Some local coaches ask questions that are nonsense… it doesn't help with anything at all… like we don't need someone to tell us what we need to do. Like some coaches even say, 'you need to do that, you need to do this', and it makes us feel no, we're not children anymore. So, finding a good coach is really hard… Coaches really need a high level of IQ and emotional intelligence."

However, some participants also note that the leader development process can include other forms of support to navigate the journey of self-discovery. One participant says that: "[…] *Most of the time, I process the leadership by myself… I also get feedback from my colleague, who I usually work with… Then, I try to find support from people around me. So, I've never been alone*" (Participant 9). One participant also notes how she works with her husband to gain insights. She says: "[…] *I usually share with my husband. He can give me some advice, and he can share with me what he feels about my change, and he can give me advice on what I should do, this or this or this*" (Participant 20).

6.3.6 Outcomes

The six-week-long coaching program focused on developing coaching skills and behaviors, in which 20 managers from the tourism and hospitality and education sectors showed that engagement in reflective practice, emotional intelligence, visioning, self-discovery, goal setting, and learning to coach could raise the participants' leadership identity, self-efficacy, and better workplace effectiveness. The specific change that occurs for them is that they can clearly see the type of leaders they are and how they want to present themselves to others—a form of leadership identity. For example, this idea is expressed by one participant that says: "*I'm always the one who likes to inspire people, inspire, and anchor and support them to help people what they really want to do, what makes them happy in a job or life. I try to give good energy, not negative energy.*

I want to be an inspirational person...never be rude to others to make them lose their positive energy in life... always listen to people before making judgments" (Participant 9).

Most participants have strengthened their resourcefulness through emotional and social competencies, improved strategic choices to deal with conflict, and deepened their essence to help others develop and feel good in the process. One participant says that: *"[...] I realized that my hidden abilities were much stronger than I thought. If I want to make my dreams come true, I have to be passionate and dedicated. If I want to succeed, I must constantly learn, improve, and practice physical and mental health"* (Participant 16). Another participant also expresses a similar sentiment and says: *"[...] I had a different mindset after each session"* (Participant 12). Yet another participant shows how the other orientation—being there to serve others—can lead to more pleasant feelings and satisfaction at work. She says: *"[...] I care more for others, not just myself, but think for them. This makes me more open and able to keep good relationships with others like senior colleagues, junior colleagues, guests... I can better manage my stress and be there for my team... think from their shoes, making them my friends for life, not just colleagues at work"* (Participant 18).

It is evident that most participants support the idea of managerial coaching in the tourism and hospitality context in Vietnam. One participant expresses this as such: *"[...] I began to think about my leadership style and found the proper styles for me. Then, I began to focus on teamwork, interact with my colleagues, accept differences, and motivate my team. Especially, I tend to think bigger and share the vision with my whole team to make sure they know their role and responsibilities of the general goal"* (Participant 20).

While the above outcomes shed light on the early impact of the coaching program (during the program), the analysis also points to when and how the various personal changes occur. The weekly reflections provide important means of understanding participants' experiences through their insights of highlighted events during each week as the participants continue to apply their learning at work, how they start to change their thinking and reinforce new behaviors. Each topic provides an opportunity for the participants to focus and strengthen their desired behaviors in a scaffolded way. Evidently, the participants continue to practice what works for them, leading to improved habits week by week, as noted by one participant: *"[...] I became stronger and calmer... I can now overcome challenges in my work and life"* (Participant 16).

In terms of the end-of-program survey completed by 14 participants, the analysis identified up to three workplace-level outcome examples in this category. There were 39 responses in total, which fell into 7 themes. The top four behavioral outcomes comprised "working collaboratively with others to achieve common goals," "spreading leadership knowledge," "motivating and influencing others," and "coaching others."

7. Discussion

This study contributes to the management literature, hospitality and tourism sectors, and broadly, the experience economy by shedding light on the process of managerial coaching underpinned by intentional change theory. This study aimed to explore how a coaching program designed for junior to mid-level managers can drive change in coached managers and how and when the change occurred during training. These objectives were to fundamentally help address the gap in the managerial coaching literature by examining how coaching training can support the development of managers in the post-pandemic times, to lead effectively in "the new normal."

The findings indicated that the six-week coaching program facilitated the emergence of incremental discoveries through deepened self-awareness, such as the essence of clarity around the ideal and real self, associated with self-efficacy beliefs at the end of the coaching program. This is in line with prior research that showed executive coaching increased self-efficacy [52]. Self-efficacy to lead has been derived through the program's learning content and two coaching sessions. Specifically, the key discovery was triggered by the one-on-one coaching sessions with the leadership development coach as it enabled the program participants to clarify their visions and build an agenda around these self-determined visions. These findings enrich the intentional change theory by demonstrating the implications and effects of one's desired state of visioning and exploring the ideal self [53], and how the coaching approach with a high-quality coaching interaction can help facilitate and reinforce the coached individuals' drive, agency, and determination to transcend and transform the conventional ways of working.

The study also revealed that the participants' evolved emotional intelligence was also the critical element to their resourcefulness, and that the participants have strengthened the ability to control and manage their emotions before engaging in actions and interactions with others, thus choosing the right mindsets and strategies to deal with issues and challenges more effectively. The context of managerial coaching, emotions' role, and their impact on leaders' efficacy and other outcomes in the Vietnamese setting had not yet been explored in the extant research. These preliminary findings therefore suggest that the desire to help others on their path to evolve their leadership skills and behaviors (e.g., coached managers wanting to coach their colleagues and teams) can help transcend the self, leading to more positive mindsets and engagement at work. Hence, when the participants feel in control of their emotions and connect with their visions, the more they are able to work effectively and foster collaborative practices in their organizations. Hence, the results are in agreement with the studies on coaching with compassion [47].

The cycling through the intentional change theory dimensions of discoveries also contributed to the strengthening of the leadership identity through experimentation (emotional, social, cognitive), reflection, and insights gained from the learning and workplace environments. The results are in agreement with Ibarra's findings [54] that leadership development is an opportunity to establish a "new working identity."

7.1 Theoretical implications

Intentional change theory in the context of leadership development has been well-explained by Boyatzis [36] and, to some degree, studied empirically in the organizational context [55] and individual leader level [53]. This study provides qualitative insights into the impacts of intentional change theory at the individual level—junior and mid-level managers in Vietnam, specifically as the guiding approach to coaching in the experience economy that relies on distinctive and high-quality interactions between customers and front-line employees. The study demonstrated that awareness of the self and the presence of purposeful goals and sustained drive to the continued development of the self, and the essence of developing others positively influenced the coached managers' mindset and attitude toward high-performance work practices and others orientation. Hence, this study adds to the literature and theory related to managerial coaching and leader development. In line with the five intentional change theory phases, when the coached individuals' mindset to engage is self-identified and

meaningful, it can lead to improved individual and team-related working performance and working behaviors.

7.2 Practical implications

This study shows that coaching underpinned by intentional change theory leads to the gradual strengthening of self-awareness and clarification of one's goals, leading to individual choices and actions that contribute to more collective forms of leader's behavior at the workplace (e.g., teamwork, collaboration, collective problem solving, and decision making) and leader self-efficacy (e.g., self-awareness, emotional and social intelligence, mindfulness). Several implications can be drawn for managers in the experience economy. This study demonstrates that coaching is a distinct form of managerial and leader development that can help strengthen coached managers' emotional capacity and contribute to more effective social interactions and individual, team, and organizational outcomes. The findings suggest that the development of emotional intelligence could contribute to competitive advantage as human interactions supported through employee performance and quality customer service have been linked with success in the experience economy. Therefore, investment in developing managers at the individual level could contribute to outcomes at the organizational level [56].

The findings further suggest that managers who undergo coaching training with the understanding that they can develop further as leaders and can help support the growth of others within their organization leading to realization of their strengths, values, and career aspirations and goals, which internally drive their engagement in the intentional change process. The belief that these aspiring leaders can contribute to something more significant and in the context of their organizations leads to more compassionate engagement with front-line workers, colleagues, and customers and, in turn, seem to contribute to greater job satisfaction and lowered intention to leave, for their subordinates and themselves. Dweck [57] highlighted that coaching is an essential tool that can foster employee development and productivity. Thus, to use coaching in the experience economy to develop human resources and performance, coaching interventions should be offered to aspiring leaders to support their leadership development rather than as a requirement to improve performance. As stressed by Wood and Gordon [58], during disruptive times, managers need to be provided with guidance (not instructions) and be equipped with coaching skills to help drive developmental cultures and help strengthen the weaker human resources.

Boyatzis [33] argued that "when leaders experience compassion through coaching the development of others, they experience psychophysical effects [that] can restore the body's natural healing and growth processes, thus enhancing their sustainability" (p. 1). Considering the stressful nature of tourism and hospitality roles in the current post-pandemic times, managers could engage in compassionate coaching interventions, not coaching for compliance interventions, to not only benefit from the restorative capacity gained through the coaching practice and experience but also to add value to their organizations by developing the human resources, and overall strengthening the leadership capacity for competitive advantage.

7.3 Limitations and future research

This study is linked to one manager coaching program designed for tourism and hospitality managers in Vietnam. Hence, the findings may not be generalized to all

coaching interventions. The leadership development context in Vietnam might be unique to the tourism and hospitality sectors within the broader experience economy. The cultural context in Vietnam is characterized by high power distance and collectivism [59]. Coaching managers as part of leadership development is an emerging practice, and the consideration of these elements, along with emotions and emotional intelligence, is yet to be thoroughly investigated.

This study only considered the coaching evidence that emerged during the training program (participants' weekly reflections) and immediately at the end of the coaching at 6 weeks (end-of-program survey). Future research can examine the impact of coaching and leadership development programs on post-coaching training behaviors to understand the process of sustained change. To help understand how coaching and leadership development initiatives lead to participants' attainment of the ideal self and their visions and goals.

8. Conclusion

The experience economy in the "new normal" calls for leaders at all levels as staff shortages, high-staff turnover rates, and lack of skilled workforce deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic drive the need for revised and more sustainable human resource management practices, including new ways of leading and working, to achieve competitive advantage. This qualitative study provides new insights into the coaching of managers' process in the experience economy. The study highlighted how intentional change theory could guide the coaching intervention and the coaching process to help aspiring managers (re)discover their passion through the visioning and setting meaningful goals for development. Through compassionate coaching and questioning, managers can become more self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses and use their strengths and values to activate their plans and strategies in a self-determined way. In doing so, managers can pursue attaining the ideal self in a more sustained manner. The study also examined the coaching topics that reinforced the coached managers' ability to engage in intentional change, evidently leading to improvements in individual performance and the performance of others in the managers' workplace context. The findings of this study demonstrate that coaching that is underpinned by a change theory from the leadership development field and that incorporates emotional intelligence can contribute to individual and team outcomes in a six-week-long coaching program.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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