Article

The Mediating Effect of Ownership of Psychological Behavior and Tour Leader Experience on Accountability in Order to Explore the Sustainable Business Model of the Tourism Industry

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Abstract: Since 2019, the world has been affected by COVID-19. The tourism industry, in particular, has suffered greatly. For instance, widespread travel restrictions have directly led to unemployment among tourism practitioners, especially tour leaders engaged in leading overseas tour groups. In the current environment, tour companies are limited to training only, and as such have chosen to focus on strengthening three critical areas: the leadership, psychological, and professional skills of their tour operators. This study contributes to the tourism literature by examining the direct and indirect effects of accountability on ownership of organization behavior (OOB) and tour leader personality in the context of the tourism industry, in order to expand the sustainable development of the tourism industry. The definition of OOB is that the psychological influence of the tour leader will affect their behavior, and the psychological consequences of the tour leader will be affected by experience (such as seniority of the team leader or number of tour groups). A structured questionnaire was used to survey tour leaders who hold an international license in Taiwan. The direct mediating influences of competence and having a place (psychological antecedents) on their accountability was confirmed. OOB also partially mediated the direct positive effect of the practice mechanism on their accountability. Our results also confirmed that competence and having a place are important predictors of the practice mechanism, and are better predictors of accountability than OOB. These findings should enhance the organizational design and marketing options available to travel agency businesses, as well as offering guidance to managers attempting to shape and mold their organizational culture and the behaviors of tour leaders associated with the implementation of OOB, in order to improve accountability in the sustainable business model of tourism.

Keywords: leader; accountability; tour ownership of organizational behavior; sustainable business model

1. Introduction

Both employee personality and organizational behavior (OB) have been demonstrated as key determinants of organizational success [1,2]. Moreover, while an employee’s personality may be an important predictor of OB [3,4], it may also be a better indicator of a firm’s profit than OB [5,6]. Although there are different perspectives on the nexus of
these two variables, one view is that accountability is a response derived from employee personality and OB [7,8]. Accordingly, accountability has been viewed as playing an instrumental role in driving employee personality, as well as diffusing OB throughout the tourism industry [9,10]. The performance of a tour leader can either make or break a tour’s quality [11–13], as the tour leader is the essential interface between the local guides and the tour participants, serving as a front-line provider of travel services. Mossberg [14] asserted that the performance of the tour leader affects customer loyalty and word-of-mouth of the service. Consequently, the tour leader must take full accountability; that is, the leader fully understands the rights and responsibilities of providing professional services for package tour groups [15].

The primary purpose of this study is to provide insights into the interrelated effects of the experience of tour leaders and OOB on accountability. In particular, this research addresses the following questions: Do the a priori dimensions of tour leader experience influence the adoption of ownership of organizational behavior in the condition of outbound operations? In addition, do the a priori dimensions of tour leader experience directly influence accountability, or does ownership of organizational behavior influence the link between the dimensions of personality and accountability? If so, what is the intervening mechanism by which they affect this link? This study contributes to the tourism literature by investigating the business ability of small travel agencies to effectively exploit tour leader experience and ownership of organizational behavior, in order to achieve accountability. The findings should: (1) provide insight into how internal organizational characteristics, such as tour leader experience, combine with and influence the adoption and implementation of OOB and their subsequent effect on accountability; and (2) inform owners/managers about the need to effectively employ a combination of personality capabilities to achieve superior accountability. Evidence that particular types of tour leader experience support OOB will provide managers with the motivation to fully shape tour leader experience, in order to effectively deploy the behaviors associated with OOB, and thereby obtain superior accountability.

This study investigates practical mechanisms that affect antecedents and behavioral outcomes. It considers the various factors required to better understand the issues influencing the success of the tourism industry. Various research studies have been conducted in order to evaluate the effects of the determinants on customer satisfaction, tour leader preference, and behavior [5,16–19], as well as management and marketing [20–23]. Most notably, the study of Tsaur and Teng [21] investigated the factors affecting tour-guiding styles and provided a foundation. Despite the studies carried out to date, there is still a paucity of empirical research focused on the simultaneous effects of antecedents and factors of behavioral outcomes on mechanisms [7,24,25]. According to Saks [21], this study also considers both antecedents and behavior-outcome factors for a better understanding of which tour leaders are more effective in mechanism; rarely have studies incorporated this matter previously.

This study is important to the tour-leader-dispatching sector, which comprises travel agency businesses, as these operations compete in a crowded and often undifferentiated market [26,27]. Moreover, research has suggested that the tourism industry is exposed to higher levels of risk related to the effect of daily tour service quality on tourist satisfaction, as transportation, tour guides, food and beverage facilities, shopping facilities, stopover facilities, and museums and sites all affect tourist satisfaction; in addition, this industry has higher competitive rivalry than other industries in Turkey [1]. The tourism industry is characterized by higher levels of business concentration, higher barriers to entry [28], and lower levels of access to both tangible and intangible tourism-related resources. Resources acquired from suppliers are easily imitated by competitors [29,30]. Although major players appear to dominate the marketplace, a good proportion of the industry can be characterized as businesses that are managed by individual owners/operators. A report by the United Nations World Tourism Organization [31] revealed an upward trajectory for the growth rate of international tourists, reaching 1.2 billion and predicting 1.8 billion by 2030. As the
travel service industry prospers, it will attract more and more competitors. These travel agency businesses must achieve a competitive advantage that is not solely based on their access to better resources, but also on their ability to coordinate and combine their resources in superior ways [32]. Among these travel agency businesses, the strategic ability of the manager to shape and mold tour leader experience and OOB may determine their capacity to generate a sustainable competitive advantage and enhance accountability.

To conduct this study, psychological antecedents, practice mechanism, and behavior outcome served as three independent variables, as the presumed cause and antecedent toward the dependent variable. The tour leader’s accountability was labeled as a dependent variable with presumed effect and consequent.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1. Accountability

Accountability has been studied in the tourism industry concerning a variety of related variables, including organizational behavior [21,25,33], management [1,22], and marketing [6,34]. In general, travel agency managers have been urged to become more accountable in order to better satisfy tourist needs and achieve their business performance objectives [5,35]. The dominant view is that accountability is positively related to performance [17,36]. Though the greater emphasis on accountability may be an intuitively attractive response to rapidly changing tourist conditions, empirical findings on the relationship between accountability and psychological ownership in the tourism industry have been mixed. Some studies have found general support for a positive association between accountability and organizational behavior, as it applies to a range of tourism businesses [18].

A tour leader, also known as a tour manager, sometimes performs the tasks of a tour guide [33,37]. In East Asian countries, outbound travel often involves Group Independent Tours (GITs) [38,39], and the tour leader plays a critical role in such tours [21,40]. Religious tours, cultural tours, reunion tours for veterans, and tours for professional and interest groups are just several examples of outings that require the services of a tour leader [41,42]. The tour leader accompanies members of the tour during their trip [43,44], and is required by GPTs (Group Package Tour) to deliver core products and services, including guiding and keeping tourists happy.

Tour leaders play several instrumental, mediatory (experience management), and interpretative/sustainability (destination/resource management) roles, and have various capacities and functions as a leader, communicator, organizer, salesperson, consultant, entertainer, and representative of the travel agency [45,46]. They must be able to calmly handle crises, such as airline strikes or bus breakdowns, during the outbound period.

Organizational studies are “the examination of how individuals construct organizational structures, processes, and practices and how these, in turn, shape social relations and create institutions that ultimately influence people” [47]. Organizational studies comprise different areas that deal with the different aspects of organizations; many such approaches are functionalist, but critical research can also provide an alternative framework for understanding in the field. Organizational change is fundamental to the study of management [48].

Recently, most issues of accountability have focused on the organization of management duties and responsibilities, employee behavior and decision-making, and the results/procedure of the implementation and practice in the education domain. Relevant studies are detailed below:

1. Organization of management duties and responsibilities: As an aspect of governance, this has been central to discussions related to problems in the public sector, non-profit and private (corporate) sectors, and individual contexts [49,50]. Sandwich strategy initiatives are increasingly facilitated, in terms of “closing the feedback loop”, enhancing the relationship with accountability from citizen voices [51]. Lys, Naughton, and Wang [52] revealed their finding that CSR performance relies on financial perfor-
mance and corporate accountability, but also depends on CSR performance. A viable investigative method for the framework of algorithmic power and the applicability of transparency policies for algorithms has been discussed, alongside challenges in implementing algorithmic accountability [53,54]. The consistency and quality of information provided in the transfer of accountability (TOA) process between nurses led to findings on how to improve the procedure of TOA with no risks and poor handover [55]. The individual-level accountability concept of felt accountability and how to describe the perceptions of one’s personal accountability have also been assessed [56].

2. Employee behavior and decision-making: Thompson [57] posited that many different individuals in large organizations contribute in many ways to decisions and policies; as such, it is difficult, even in principle, to identify who should be accountable for the results. Two ideal types of such hybrids—differentiated and integrated—and two key challenges of governance they face have been submitted: accountability for dual performance objectives, and accountability to multiple principal stakeholders [58,59]. The accountability framework has identified multiple levers for change, including quasi-regulatory and strengthened accountability systems [60,61]. The new accountability relationships between a local city hall, its citizens, and stakeholders, after executing austerity politics and its budget cuts for local authorities, have been shown to lead to social implications in terms of resource diversions and service cuts [62].

3. Implementation and practice in the education domain: Coburn, Hill, and Spillane [63] argued that accountability and alignment constitute important ways to measure how these additional variables function (i.e., system-level, organizational, and individual capacities; organizational networks and environments; the specificity of policy; and the ambitiousness of the instructional ideas advanced by policy) within settings that vary systematically by the strength of the accountability system and level of alignment. The authors proposed a new approach that reclaims and embraces accountability, and reconstructs its targets, purposes, and consequences in education [64]. The accountability pressure affecting various non-achievement student behaviors and the causal impact of this form of accountability pressure have been examined [65]. The relationships between the distribution of school expenditures, class size, qualified teachers, mathematics achievement, and performance-driven accountability policies in equity have been discussed [66,67]. Furthermore, some studies have attempted to provide an effective accountability system, which should give students, parents, and governments confidence in new frameworks for shaping new standards [68,69].

4. Relevant Studies in the Hotel Industry: Munteanu, Bibu, Nastase, Cristache, and Matis [70] stated that sports and recreational facilities, traditional food and beverage businesses, employees’ behaviors, and accountability systems affect service quality. A theoretical framework to determine the variables that explain the phenomenon of turnover intention, and that identifies the antecedents of employee turnover, has been proposed [71,72].

5. Empowerment, Humility, Stewardship, Standing Back, Forgiveness, Courage, Accountability, Authenticity, and Affective Commitment: Those have been determined to be crucial in servant leadership issues [73,74]. This sector triggered the motives of this study. For travel industry leaders, when implementing the company’s assigned foreign tourism missions, facing tourists, local tour guides, and suppliers of relevant resources, the leader of the team should consider accountability issues, and whether there are any intermediary factors that will affect the psychological predecessors of the team leader and even further influence the level of responsibility of the team leader.

2.2. Recent Literature on Travel Agencies and Tour Leaders

Accountability has been studied in the tourism industry in relation to a number of related variables, including organizational behavior [21,25,33], management [1,22], and marketing [6,74]. In general, travel agency managers have been urged to become more
accountable, better satisfy tourist needs, and achieve their business performance objectives [5,34]. Though a greater emphasis on accountability may be an intuitively attractive response to rapidly changing tourist conditions, empirical findings pertaining to the relationship between accountability and psychological ownership in the tourism industry have been mixed. Some studies have found general support for a positive association between accountability and organizational behavior as it applies to a range of tourism business [18].

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Tour leaders play a number of critically important roles, including mediatory (experience management) and interpretative/sustainability (destination/resource management) roles, and in various capacities and functions as a leader, communicator, organizer, salesperson, consultant, entertainer, and representative of the travel agency [44,45]. They must be able to calmly handle crises, such as airline strikes and bus breakdowns, during an outbound tour.

2.3. Ownership of Organizational Behavior (OOB)

Organizational behavior (OB) is “the study of human behavior in organizational settings, the interface between human behavior and the organization, and the organization itself” [75,76]. OB research can be categorized in at least three ways, including the study of:
1. Individuals in organizations (micro-level);
2. Work groups (meso-level); and
3. How organizations behave (macro-level) [77].

Organizational studies also deal with different aspects of organizations. Although many of the most commonly used approaches are functionalist, critical research also provides alternative frameworks for understanding in the field. Organizational change is fundamental to the study of management [47]. Roots, Routes, and Results in Kostova: According to Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks [78], it is common for people to psychologically experience the connection between self and various targets of possession, such as homes, automobiles, and other people [79]. The study extends the viewpoint of Kostova and enhances the personality of tour leaders to describe the situation of travel agencies.

2.3.1. Roots

The search for the roots of psychological ownership begins when we address the question ‘Why does psychological ownership exist?’ or, more specifically, ‘What is the motivation or function served by the individual by this state?’ In response to this question, some have explained the existence of this state as originating in an individual’s genetic structure; while others have focused on nurturance. Pierce et al. [78] have identified three major routes (i.e., paths, techniques, or mechanisms) through which psychological ownership emerges, and suggested that the roots of psychological ownership could be found in three main motives: (i) efficacy and effectance—the desire to experience causal efficacy in altering the environment leads to attempts to take possession and to the emergence of ownership feelings; (ii) self-identity—people use ownership for the purpose of defining themselves, expressing their self-identity to others, and ensuring the continuity of their self across time; and (iii) having a place—it is because of this motive and the possibility to satisfy it through ownership that people devote significant energy and resources to targets that can potentially become their home [78,79].
2.3.2. Routes

In the previous section, we discussed the issue of why the state of psychological ownership exists. In this section, we review how organizational members come to feel ownership. Specifically, Pierce et al. [78] have identified three major routes through which psychological ownership emerges:

(i) Controlling the Target: In such systems or organizations, individuals learn that nothing is ‘theirs,’ as power is placed in the structure, and people have limited control over the organization or any part of it.

(ii) Coming to Intimately Know the Target: Organizations provide their members with a number of opportunities to get to know potential targets of ownership, such as work, jobs, teams, and projects, through various processes of association.

(iii) Investing the Self into the Target: As a result, the individual may begin to feel that the target of ownership flows from the self. The more individuals invest themselves into a target, the stronger their psychological ownership for that target [78,79].

2.3.3. Results

This section of the study adopted several effects of psychological ownership on organizations based on the work of Pierce et al. [78]. First, they discussed some positive effects, including expected rights and presumed responsibilities. They focused on the effects of psychological ownership on organizational change, borrowing from the recent work of Dirks, Cummings, and Pierce [80].

2.3.4. Personality Traits

Traditionally, organizational researchers have focused on the overall concept of personality, while most researchers have focused on a narrower domain, reflecting the physical and psychological growth and development of an individual throughout their entire life, which forms the inner perspective for a dynamic organizational concept [81,82].

2.4. Ownership of Organizational Behavior (OOB) and Accountability

OOB also includes personality traits that are the most stable and important components of personal characteristics in a person’s life [83,84]. Simply stated, personality traits refer to a psychological phenomenon that creates an external impression based on personal characteristics. Nevertheless, the characteristics of personality are not totally reflected externally; some parts are deeply held concepts that are hidden inside by that individual. Different personalities will produce different personal behaviors [85]. At present, the most widely accepted theory is the five-type personality, which includes extroverted, agreeable, conscientious, open-minded, and neurological personality types [83,84]. These five major personality types serve as the basic framework of personality [83,84,86].

On the basis of the literature reviewed, we combined the concepts of organizational behavior, personality, psychological ownership, and the tourism industry to propose the framework. We adopted diverse theories and viewpoints and submitted the foundation of this framework to our hypotheses. The hypotheses include psychological antecedents, practical mechanisms, behavior outcomes, and the mediating effect of practical mechanisms between psychological antecedents and behavior outcomes on tour leaders who execute their duties, obligations, and procedures of operation. We hypothesized the following (see Figure 1):
Hypothesis 1 (H1a). In the context of accountability, competence will positively influence the leadership of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 1 (H1b). In the context of accountability, competence will positively influence the acknowledgment of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 1 (H1c). In the context of accountability, competence will positively influence the commitment of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 2 (H2a). In the context of accountability, self-identity will positively influence the leadership of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 2 (H2b). In the context of accountability, self-identity will positively influence the acknowledgment of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 2 (H2c). In the context of accountability, self-identity will positively influence the commitment of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 3 (H3a). In the context of accountability, having a place will positively influence the leadership of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 3 (H3b). In the context of accountability, having a place will positively influence the acknowledgment of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 3 (H3c). In the context of accountability, having a place will positively influence the commitment of tour leaders.

Hypothesis 4. The leadership of tour leaders mediates between competence (self-identity, having a place) and accountability.

Hypothesis 5. Acknowledgement of tour leaders mediates between competence (self-identity, having a place) and accountability.

Hypothesis 6. The commitment level of tour leaders mediates between competence (self-identity, having a place) and accountability.
3. Research Methodology

3.1. Measurement

3.1.1. Accountability

Accountability was measured in terms of three distinct dimensions: psychological antecedents, practical mechanisms, and behavior outcomes. The accountability index (AI) developed for this study had 27 items (13 for the dimensions of psychological antecedents, 12 for the dimensions of practical mechanisms, and 4 for the dimensions of behavior outcomes). A total of 304 questionnaires returned by tour leaders were valid (95% valid response rate, 340 questionnaires in total). Most respondents were men (60.5%), leading an outbound group of size less than five (37.5%), aged above 50 years old (46.0%), had not graduated from a tourism-related program (84.2%), and had more than 15 years of experience as tour leaders (46.1%). The AI concept has been widely adopted and validated by other researchers [6,17,87], who found reliability estimates ranging from 0.52 to 0.96. The reliability coefficients obtained in this study fell within this range (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample and respondent information (n = 304).

| # of Responses | Percentage | Description                  |
|----------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Gender:        |            |                              |
| Male           | 184        | 60.5%                        | Tour leader’s Gender |
| Female         | 120        | 39.5%                        |                        |
| Age:           |            |                              |
| <25            | 8          | 2.6%                         | Tour leader’s Age      |
| 26–35          | 16         | 5.3%                         |                        |
| 36–45          | 80         | 26.3%                        |                        |
| 46–55          | 136        | 44.7%                        |                        |
| >56            | 64         | 21.1%                        |                        |
| Graduated from Tourism-Field | | Study in Tourism-related School |
| Yes            | 48         | 15.8%                        | How Many Country       |
| No             | 256        | 84.2%                        | The Tour Leader Been   |
|                |            |                              | Abroad?                |
| # Outbound Country |          |                              |
| Only 1         | 80         | 26.3%                        | How Many Overseas      |
| 2–4            | 136        | 44.7%                        | Groups Has The         |
| >5             | 88         | 28.9%                        | Team Leader Led?       |
| # Group(s):    |            |                              |
| <5             | 114        | 37.5%                        | How Many Overseas      |
| 5–10           | 102        | 33.6%                        | Groups Has The         |
| 11–15          | 16         | 5.3%                         | Team Leader Led?       |
| >15            | 72         | 23.7%                        |                          |
| Length of Time in Current Position: | | Tour Leader’s Working Experience |
| <1 Years       | 74         | 24.3%                        |                          |
| 1–5 Years      | 8          | 2.6%                         |                          |
| 6–10 Years     | 66         | 21.7%                        |                          |
| 11–15 Years    | 16         | 5.3%                         |                          |
| Over 15 Years  | 140        | 46.1%                        |                          |

3.1.2. What Is Ownership of Organizational Behavior? Psychological Antecedents, Practical Mechanisms, and Behavior Outcomes

A psychological antecedent has been defined as “competence, self-identity, and having a place of the psychological situation to the group/community level so that the target becomes part of the psychological owner’s identity” [88–90]. Employee psychological ownership (EPO) was the first construct considering both job and personal resources of self-efficacy, self-identity, accountability, sense of belonging, and territoriality in its conceptualization [91]. The items were measured on a five-point scale, anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”.
A practical mechanism has been defined as being “in charge of the package group tour, acknowledgment of leaders, and level of commitment of the leader as measured by psychological situation motivation” [92,93], as the drive to engage in behaviors to satisfy the motives that underlie the psychological condition. This study extended the conception to identify three major routes (i.e., effects or mechanisms) through which psychological situations emerge [78,94]. The process—called the moderator effect—from psychological antecedents to behavior outcomes, is the key focus of this study. The items were measured on a five-point scale, anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”.

A behavior outcome has been defined as “Accountability of impacting directly/indirectly behavior outcome and be integrating research on the psychological aspects of behavioral consequence with an emerging theory on psychological ownership field” [95,96]. Linking the broad notion of responsibility (accountability) are several other organizational effects that may facilitate the outgrowth of a psychological situation, including stewardship, citizenship behaviors, personal sacrifice, and the assumption of risk, on behalf of an organization or self-target [78,94]. The items were measured on a five-point scale, anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”.

3.1.3. Control Variables

Based on theoretical evidence, tour leader experience and tour leader OOB were included in the analysis, in order to control for potential interpretational confounders. Tour leader experience, measured in terms of the OOB of tour leaders, was included, as it could affect a tour leader’s accountability [24,25]. A log listing the employees by number was used in order to minimize issues relating to the skewness of data. Tour leader experience was included, as prior experience of guiding outbound tours may indicate less ownership and a slower rate of response to change, thus being associated with lower ownership of psychological behavior. Tour leader experience was measured in terms of the number of years or outbound trips.

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The sample consisted of Taiwanese tour leaders working in consolidated travel agencies and class-A travel agencies that have been certified for overseas dispatch. Convenience sampling was used for the purposes of this study. More specifically, the first author conducted in-person data collection by targeting personal travel agency contacts throughout Taiwan. It was decided that only hard-copy surveys would be distributed to tour leaders in order to reach the widest range of travel agency employees, including those without access to the Internet or an airport. In addition, surveys were distributed in Chinese, the native language of the tour leaders.

The questionnaires were anonymous and confidential, as no personal identification numbers or information were requested. At each stage, the questionnaire was refined, concerning its clarity and formatting. The self-administered questionnaire was designed to collect empirical data from tour leaders, and 400 questionnaires were sent to tour leaders who were members of a Facebook group exclusively for members of Taiwanese travel agency associations. The questionnaire survey period for samples was between 1 January 2018, and 30 May 2019, and 340 questionnaires were returned, 304 of which were valid (95% valid response rate). Sample and respondent characteristics are presented in Table 1.

3.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

SEM (structural equation modeling) takes a confirmatory (hypothesis-testing) approach to the multivariate analysis of a structural theory, one that stipulates causal relations among multiple variables. The goal is to determine whether a hypothesized theoretical model is consistent with the data collected to reflect this theory. The consistency is evaluated through a model–data fit, indicating the extent to which the postulated network of relations among variables is plausible [97,98].
Furthermore, the data were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA), using principal component analysis and varimax rotation, to clarify the number of items. Items with a factor loading of less than 0.5 or with a high factor loading on the other factors were removed [99,100]. The EFA results showed that the factor loadings of the 27 items (PA = 12 items; PM = 11 items; BO = 4 items) were 0.5 or higher; thus, all items were retained and were reliable.

Composite reliability (CR) = 0.7 indicates high reliability. Fornell and Larcker [101] suggested a threshold as C.R > 0.6. Table 2 shows the conditions of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE): competence (CR = 0.864, AVE = 0.569), self-identity (CR = 0.887, AVE = 0.667), having a place (CR = 0.688, AVE = 0.424), leadership of the package group tour (CR = 0.881, AVE = 0.648), acknowledgement of leaders (CR = 0.808, AVE = 0.517), commitment of leaders (CR = 0.810, AVE = 0.589), and accountability (CR = 0.810, AVE = 0.519). The values of CR and AVE were fit to the model [100,102].

**Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis- Tour Leader.**

| Factor/Item                  | Mean | Factor Loading | CR   | AVE  | Cronbach's α | Model Fit Indices |
|-----------------------------|------|----------------|------|------|--------------|-------------------|
| Psychological Antecedents   |      |                |      |      |              | Chi-square = 893.016 |
| Competence                  |      |                | 0.864| 0.569| 0.718        | df = 312          |
| PA11                        | 3.71 | 0.80           |      |      |              | p value = 0.000   |
| PA12                        | 3.84 | 0.86           |      |      |              | GFI = 0.825       |
| PA13                        | 3.84 | 0.87           |      |      |              | AGFI = 0.788      |
| PA14                        | 3.91 | 0.66           |      |      |              | CFI = 0.888       |
| PA15                        | 3.88 | 0.52           |      |      |              | RMSEA = 0.078     |
| PA21                        | 3.79 | 0.63           | 0.887| 0.667|              | NNFI = 0.874      |
| Self-identity               |      |                |      |      |              | IFI = 0.889       |
| PA23                        | 4.16 | 0.78           |      |      |              |                   |
| PA24                        | 3.97 | 0.96           |      |      |              |                   |
| PA25                        | 3.89 | 0.86           |      |      |              |                   |
| PA31                        | 3.66 | 0.62           | 0.688| 0.424|              |                   |
| PA32                        | 3.68 | 0.71           |      |      |              |                   |
| PA33                        | 3.71 | 0.62           |      |      |              |                   |
| Practical Mechanism         |      |                | 0.935|      |              |                   |
| Leadership of tour leaders  |      |                | 0.881| 0.648|              |                   |
| PM12                        | 3.57 | 0.79           |      |      |              |                   |
| PM13                        | 3.57 | 0.83           |      |      |              |                   |
| PM14                        | 3.58 | 0.82           |      |      |              |                   |
| PM15                        | 3.55 | 0.78           |      |      |              |                   |
| Acknowledgement of Tour Leaders |      |                | 0.808| 0.517|              |                   |
| PM21                        | 3.71 | 0.55           |      |      |              |                   |
| PM22                        | 3.68 | 0.77           |      |      |              |                   |
| PM23                        | 3.63 | 0.80           |      |      |              |                   |
| PM24                        | 3.66 | 0.73           |      |      |              |                   |
| Commitment Level of the Tour Leader |      |                | 0.81 | 0.589|              |                   |
| PM31                        | 3.60 | 0.65           |      |      |              |                   |
| PM32                        | 3.65 | 0.82           |      |      |              |                   |
| PM33                        | 3.70 | 0.82           |      |      |              |                   |
| Behavior Outcome            |      |                |      |      | 0.809        |                   |
| Accountability              |      |                | 0.81 | 0.519|              |                   |
| TA11                        | 3.76 | 0.81           |      |      |              |                   |
| TA12                        | 3.77 | 0.72           |      |      |              |                   |
| TA13                        | 3.85 | 0.7            |      |      |              |                   |
| TA14                        | 3.86 | 0.64           |      |      |              |                   |

Hair (1997) suggested Composite Reliability (CR) = 0.7 indicates good reliability; Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested CR > 0.6.
4. Results

4.1. Reliability and Validity

In this study, the following demographics were tested: age, position in a travel agency, the number of times servicing outbound groups, and length of time that tour leaders had worked in the position they were in, as well as with travel agencies overall. Descriptive data of the sample are provided in Table 1. At the same time, the exclusion of some items from the cultural-type scales left 12 items for psychological antecedents, 11 items for the practical mechanisms, and 4 items for behavior outcomes (see Table 2). The internal consistency of the scales used was assessed by Cronbach’s alpha: psychological antecedents = 0.718, practical mechanism = 0.935, and behavior outcome = 0.809. These results are presented in Table 2. The measurement model was then examined, and it exhibited acceptable fit statistics [103,104], with chi-square/df = 2.86, GFI = 0.825, NNFI = 0.874, AGFI = 0.788, CFI = 0.888, and RMSEA = 0.078. These values suggest that the model represented the data fairly well.

For the analysis of the data gathered, Amos 22 was used. SEM was performed to estimate the effects of leader accountability and the mediator style/adaptability of the practical mechanism on their psychological antecedents. SEM is a methodology for representing, estimating, and testing a network of relationships between variables; namely, measured variable and latent constructs [105]. SEM can be used to study the relationships among latent constructs, as indicated by multiple measures, structural relations, and hypotheses about directional influences or causal relations between multiple variables (e.g., how independent variables affect dependent variables) [98,106].

The comparative fit index (CFI) is equal to the discrepancy function adjusted for sample size, which ranges from 0 to 1, with a larger value indicating better model fit. An acceptable model fit is indicated by a CFI value of 0.90 or greater [104,107]. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is related to the residual in the model, with RMSEA values ranging from 0 to 1, with a smaller RMSEA value indicating better model fit. An acceptable model fit is indicated by an RMSEA value of 0.06 or less [104,107].

4.2. Test of Hypotheses

Regression analysis was used to estimate the effects of the OOB dimensions and accountability on tour leaders. Due to sample-size considerations, not only regression analysis was applied in this study, but the structural equations approach also was adopted. Mediation analysis was performed following the procedure described by Baron and Kenny [108]. The standardized regression coefficients suggested that an emphasis on OOB had the largest positive effect on accountability, followed by tour leader experience. Regression analysis was also used to estimate the effect of the OOB dimensions on tour leader experience. Accountability was designated as the dependent variable, and the dimensions of OOB were treated as the independent variable in examining hypotheses H1a/b/c, H2a/b/c, and H3a/b/c. The composite scores representing the OOB dimensions were regressed against accountability. Table 3 reports the main effect results of regressing accountability on the OOB dimensions. The psychological antecedents (β = 0.188, p < 0.001), practice mechanisms (β = 0.182, p < 0.001), and behavior outcomes (β = 0.511, p < 0.001) for the OOB dimensions were significantly related to accountability [109]. Accordingly, the p-value of the three dimensions of PA (PM, BO) is less than 0.001, so the regression equation of this research has predictive effects. We found p-value of PA (PM, BO) is significant for regression analysis (see Table 3).

Table 3. Regression analysis.

|                          | Unstandardized Coefficient Beta | SE    | Standardized Coefficient Beta | t-Value | Significant |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|---------|-------------|
| (Constant)               | −0.219                         | 0.131 | −1.673                        | 0.095   |             |
| Psychological Antecedents| 0.208                          | 0.031 | 0.188                         | 6.453   | 0.000 ***   |
| Practice Mechanisms      | 0.184                          | 0.030 | 0.182                         | 6.153   | 0.000 ***   |
| Behavior Outcome         | 0.550                          | 0.0289| 0.511                         | 19.182  | 0.000 ***   |

Dependent variable: Accountability; n = 304, *** p < 0.001 (two-tailed test).
Accountability was designated as the dependent variable, and the dimensions of OOB and tour leader experience were treated as the independent variables in examining hypotheses H1a/b/c, H2a/b/c, and H3a/b/c. The composite scores determined based on the loading of each factor representing the OOB dimensions and tour leader experience were regressed against the accountability. The OOB dimensions (psychological antecedents, practical mechanisms, and behavior outcomes) and tour leader experience were modeled as control variables in all the analyses.

As shown in Table 4, the correlation coefficient had an influence among hypotheses H1a/b/c, H2a/b/c, and H3a/b/c. Only self-identity of psychological antecedents had a negative influence on practice mechanisms (affected by external factor- local guide). The other psychological antecedents had a positive influence on practice mechanisms.

Table 4. Construct correlation coefficient matrix.

| Construct                      | Competence | Self-Identity | Having a Place | Leadership of Tour Leaders | Acknowledgement of Tour Leaders | Commitment Level of Tour Leaders | Accountability |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Competence                     | 1          | -0.146 *      | -0.215 **      | 0.719 **                  | 0.761 **                       | 1                                |                |
| Self-Identity                  | -0.146 *   | 1             |                |                           |                                |                                  |                |
| Having a place                 | 0.684 *    | -0.215 **     | 0.719 **       | 0.761 **                  | 1                              | 1                                |                |
| Leadership of tour leaders     | 0.719 **   | -0.166 **     | 0.761 **       | 1                         |                                |                                  |                |
| Acknowledgement of tour leaders| 0.715 **   | -0.150 **     | 0.731 **       | 0.879 **                  | 1                              | 1                                |                |
| Commitment level of tour leaders| 0.717 **  | -0.114 *      | 0.682 **       | 0.821 **                  | 0.855 **                       | 1                                |                |
| Accountability                 | 0.767 **   | -0.087        | 0.632 **       | 0.772 **                  | 0.798 **                       | 0.844 **                        | 1              |

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

4.3. Post Hoc Analysis: Mediation

The hypotheses were examined by modeling the practical mechanisms of OOB as a mediating variable. Mediation represents the generative mechanism through which the independent variable influences the dependent variable [108,109]. A mediator is considered to be an internal, intervening variable, which enables the antecedent variable to affect a criterion variable. Mediation tests help to identify the existence of a significant intervening practical mechanisms (leading the package group tour, acknowledgment of leaders, and the commitment level of the leaders) between psychological antecedents (competence, self-identity, having a place) and the dependent variable (accountability). As such, mediation tests can decompose the effect that a set of independent and mediator variables has on the criterion variable into direct and indirect effects. Mediation can be partial or complete. In partial mediation, a direct relationship exists between the independent variable and criterion variable, in addition to an indirect relationship through the mediating variable. In complete mediation, the presence of the mediating variable is essential for the independent variable to significantly affect the criterion variable [110].

As suggested in the hypotheses, it was expected that the practical mechanisms of OOB would mediate the relationship between the psychological antecedents and accountability. According to Baron and Kenny [108], in order to establish mediation, the following four conditions must be met:

1. Tour leader experience should have a significant effect on the practical mechanism of OOB;
2. The practical mechanism of OOB should have a significant effect on accountability;
3. Tour leader experience should have a significant effect on accountability;
4. The practical mechanism of OOB should have a significant effect on accountability, when accountability was regressed against both tour leader experience and the practical mechanism of OOB mediation analysis was performed following the procedure.
The calculated statistics of model fit were as follows: $\chi^2/df = 2.86$, RMSEA = 0.078, and $p$-value = 0.000. The rest of the statistics are given in Table 2. The statistics of fit indicated that the given model was acceptable. The mediator effect was investigated by total, direct, and indirect effects of the bootstrapping function, “Self-identity,” three mediators (leadership, acknowledgment, and commitment level), and non-mediating effects (bias-corrected and percentile 95% CIs), which, in accountability, were as follows: for leadership $(-0.101–0.135; -1.103–0.134)$, acknowledgment $(-0.043–0.132; -0.049–0.126)$, and commitment level $(-0.078–0.125; -0.078–0.125)$. Those values included 0, while the remaining mediators were “partial effects”, which did not include 0. The results of the model fit the proposed hypotheses (see Table 5); however, the effect of self-identity on the practical mechanism of OOB was found to be insignificant.

Table 5. Test of Mediator Effect-Total, Direct and Indirect Effects & test of hypothesis.

| Variable | Product of Coefficients | Bootstrapping | Mediator Effect | Hypothesis | Significant |
|----------|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------|-------------|
|          |                         |               | Bias-Corrected 95% CI | Percentile 95% CI |            |
|          |                         |               | Lower | Upper | Lower | Upper |            |
| **X**   | **M**                  | **SE** | **C.R.** | **Lower** | **Upper** | **Lower** | **Upper** |            |
| Competence | Leadership of Tour Leaders | 0.045 | 6.461 | 0.178 | 0.418 | 0.169 | 0.412 | Partial |
|          | Acknowledgement of Tour Leaders | 0.04 | 6.601 | 0.171 | 0.371 | 0.168 | 0.37 | Partial |
|          | Commitment Level of Tour Leaders | 0.048 | 8.505 | 0.292 | 0.531 | 0.282 | 0.523 | Partial |
| Self-identity | Leadership of Tour Leaders | 0.047 | 0.190 | -0.101 | 0.135 | -0.103 | 0.134 | None |
|          | Acknowledgement of Tour Leaders | 0.036 | 1.080 | -0.043 | 0.132 | -0.049 | 0.126 | None |
|          | Commitment Level of Tour Leaders | 0.04 | 0.372 | -0.078 | 0.125 | -0.078 | 0.125 | None |
| Having a Place | Leadership of Tour Leaders | 0.129 | 8.911 | 0.65 | 1.475 | 0.903 | 1.504 | Partial |
|          | Acknowledgement of Tour Leaders | 0.12 | 7.729 | 0.734 | 1.191 | 0.735 | 1.195 | Partial |
|          | Commitment Level of Tour Leaders | 0.11 | 8.164 | 0.892 | 1.23 | 0.652 | 1.233 | Partial |

Note: 2000 bootstrap samples.

We applied a path analysis as an extension of the multiple regression, as it involved various multiple regression models, such that equations were estimated simultaneously. This provided a more effective and direct way of modeling mediation and indirect effects, as well as other complex relationships among variables. Path analysis can be considered a special case of SEM, in which structural relations among observed (vs. latent) variables are modeled, as shown in Figure 2. Only the path from “Acknowledgement of leaders” to “Accountability” showed a negative value (−1.636), in contrast to our assumed value (positive value). This result may have been due to the behavior of the tour leaders being affected by local tour guides.
Figure 2. Path analysis of the structural model.

5. Discussion and Managerial Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of accountability on OOB and tour leader experience in the context of tourism businesses. The length of time as a team leader and the number of groups affected OOB, and we discussed these results with the tour leaders in person. Adopting arguments based on marketing research, we hypothesized that tourism businesses with tour leader experience would be better positioned to implement the practical mechanism of OOB, thereby increasing accountability. The results of our study confirmed the majority of these propositions. The findings should provide both theoretical and practical inferences. From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to organization behavior theory by examining the direct and indirect effects of tour leader experience on accountability, transmitted through the practical mechanism of OOB. Specifically, it was found that the practical mechanism of OOB partially mediated the direct positive effect of tour leaders’ experience on their accountability.

This study built on this perspective, and found that certain OOB dimensions can be regarded as resources that can also be utilized to develop a competitive advantage in the restaurant industry. Specifically, the results demonstrated that tour leader experience and supportive OOB dimensions can serve as resources that enhance the competitive position of independent tourism-related businesses, thereby improving tour leader accountability. In support of our results, we also confirmed that tour leader experience was an important antecedent to OOB and a better predictor of accountability than OOB. Our study demonstrated the need to effectively deploy existing resources to facilitate the implementation of OOB, thereby improving tour leader accountability and the profit of travel agencies [25].

According to the results or consequence of the proposed framework, the practical mechanism played an important role in this study, being a key factor in determining a tour leader’s decisions and behavior, based on internal factors and external conditions. The decisions they make not only impact the tourists they serve, but also the travel agency for which they contract and their professional reputation. We cite the concept from Sigmund Freud’s “Ego” [111], in which Freud concedes that, as the ego attempts to mediate between id and reality (similar to the concept of psychological antecedents in this study), the ego is a regulating mechanism that enables the individual to delay gratifying their immediate needs in order to function more effectively in the real world. This study lends credence to Freud’s hypothesis and suggests that tour leaders could operate more effectively if they adopted a similar attitude. The Tour Leader Guiding Styles (TLGS) scale can be used by tour leaders for self-assessment, and as a means to confirm that their tour-guiding styles meet the recommended criteria [21]. It also helps to facilitate the involvement of tour leaders in decision-making, boosts intelligence gathering, and increases tourist and competitor orientations [110–114].
6. Conclusions, Study Limitations, and Future Research

Fotiadis, Polyzos, and Huan [115] indicated that the current decrease in tourist arrivals ranges between 30.8% and 76.3%, and will persist at least through June 2021. This provides us with an overview of the type and scale of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on tourism (and will likely continue to have, for some time to come). However, this pandemic may have a silver lining, as Taiwanese employees have traditionally spent time during a down economy to strengthen and diversify their professional skill sets, such that they can smoothly enter the job market again when it recovers in the future. When the tourism industry recovers, Taiwanese tour leaders will be well positioned to increase customer satisfaction and their professional standing in the industry, both at home and abroad. This study explained that the experience of tour leaders affects their OOB, especially in terms of the behavior outcome of accountability.

As with all studies, there were limitations to this research. The major limitation of this study was that the items in the questionnaire were designed and developed by the author. The sample group was Taiwan-based tour leaders, which has its own specific and unique travel-related laws/guidelines that are sometimes impacted by a Chinese practice called “Quanxi” - the interpersonal relationships is one of the major dynamics of Chinese society”, which relies heavily on developing and leveraging personal connections to complete a task [116,117]. This, of course, means that the sample group may behave differently from counterparts in other countries, where the laws, guidelines, and professional practices are not the same. Despite these limitations, this study makes an important contribution to the tourism industry literature by highlighting the mediating effects between psychological antecedents, practical mechanisms, and behavior outcomes in the accountability of tour leaders.

This study suggests that future research should focus on the effects of practical mechanisms on tour leader accountability, as well as refine the questionnaires to explore the diverse uses of practical mechanisms and the complete procedure of accountability. Future research could examine personal moral dilemmas in order to learn how comprehensive information about moral actions and consequences can be used to boost utility maximization in making moral choices [118,119]. Our results further suggest that accountability-related behaviors may be facilitated by nurturing characteristics associated with experience and the practical mechanism of OOB controlling of tour leaders.

Despite these limitations, this study makes an important contribution to the tourism business literature by highlighting the relationship between organizational behavior, tour leader experience, and accountability. These results emphasized the need for travel agency businesses to build upon and effectively exploit their internal organizational and managerial resources as they implement OOB. Non-chain travel agency businesses are more prevalent (e.g., planning special-interest tours) than their larger counterparts [120]. These businesses are traditionally resource-poor and face unique challenges in constructing strategic barriers to entry. The results of our study suggest that, by building upon current internal resources and developing new ones, as well as obtaining external resources, travel agencies may be able to ameliorate many of these challenges. Shaping and molding their organizational culture with tour leaders to include aspects of innovation and support, as well as implementing a people-oriented approach, should help non-chain or small travel agency operators to positively influence their profit margins [120,121].

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