

DAMLA SONMEZ, BA(Hons), MSc, Ph.D. Student

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. (Exp. 2025)

GPA: 3.90/4

University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA

School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Dissertation: *Training Effectiveness through Gamification: The Essential Role of Facilitators*

Chair: Scott Taylor Jr., Ph.D.

MSc. (2021)

GPA: 3.89/4

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA

School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

BBA (2018)

Antalya Bilim University, Antalya, Türkiye

Major: Business Administration, GPA: 3.79/4 with Honors

Minor: Tourism and Hotel Management, GPA: 3.87/4

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Consumer behavior

Human resource management

Conferences and meeting planning

Gamification in trainings

Human-centric engagement

PUBLICATIONS

[1] **Sonmez, D.** & Taylor, S. Jr. (2024). Nutrition and nature: Means-end theory in crafting sustainable and health-conscious meal kit experiences. *Sustainability*, 16(8), 3327.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/su16083327>

[2] **Sonmez, D.**, Ali, F., Wildes, V., & Cobanoglu, C. (2023). The Hijabi servers: Customers' perception of employees' physical appearance in restaurants. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 114, 103569.

[3] **Sonmez, D.**, Liu, L., & Mistry, T. (2023). Recruitment Issues in the Hospitality Industry. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Cases*, 11(1), 23-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21649987231208837>

[4] Iskender, A., Cakmakci, H., Hajilo, M., & **Sonmez, D.** (2023). Big Data Utilization to Explore Association between Vacation Search on Google and Happiness Index. *Tourism Studies Journal*, 4(2), 1-16.

MANUSCRIPT-IN-PROGRESS

- [1] **Sonmez, D.**, Jeong, M, Taylor S. & Martin, D. How meal kits fit into our lives: Consumers' perceived value, memorable experience and behavioral intention for meal kit service. [in prep]
- [2] Taylor, S., Whalen E., & **Sonmez, D.** Shut-Up and Brew: Consumer Perceptions of Advocacy in the Beer Industry. [in prep]

REFEREED PUBLICATIONS IN CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

- [1] **Sonmez, D.**, & Taylor, T. (2024, Jul 24-26) Means-End Theory in Crafting Sustainable and Health-Conscious Meal Kit Experiences. *2024 ICHRIE Global Conference*, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. [Complete manuscript presented]
- [2] **Sonmez, D.** & Katheldra, A. (2024, Mar 9). Level Up Teaching: GameON Strategies for New Educators. *The 9th Annual SECSA-CHRIE Conference*, Columbia, SC, USA. [Presented at Pedagogy Track]
- [3] **Sonmez, D.**, & Taylor, T. Means. (2024, Mar 8). Eco-Fit Flavors: Crafting Meal Kit Satisfaction with Means-End Theory. *The 9th Annual SECSA-CHRIE Conference*, Columbia, SC, USA. [Poster presentation]
- [4] **Sonmez, D.**, Jeong, M & Taylor S. (2024, Jan 6). Evaluation of consumers' buying behavior of meal kits by using the stimulus-organism-response framework. *29th Annual Graduate Conference 2024*, Miami, FL, USA. [Complete manuscript presented]
- [5] **Sonmez, D.**, Ali, F., Wildes, V., and Cobanoglu, C. (2023, Jan 5-7) Customers' Perceptions of Headscarf in the Restaurant Industry in the United States, *The 28th Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism*, CA, USA. [Poster presentation]
- [6] **Sonmez, D.**, & Jeong, M. (2023, Mar 10-11). How Meal Kits Fit into Our Lives: Consumers' Perceived Value, Memorable Experience and Behavioral Intention for Meal Kit Service, The 8th Annual SECSA-CHRIE Conference, Orlando, FL, USA. [Work-in-Progress presentation]
- [7] **Sonmez, D.**, & Jeong, M. (2022, Jan 7-8) Do Customers Change Their Perceptions of Airbnb During the Covid-19 Pandemic, *The 27th Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism*. (online) [Poster presentation]
- [8] **Sonmez, D.**, & Wildes, V. (2021). The Headscarf: A study on the perception of headscarves in Türkiye. Southeastern, Central and South American Federation (SECSA) 2020. (online) [Poster presentation]
- [9] Gunduz Songur, A., Cobanoglu, C. **Sonmez, D.**, & Moreo, P. (2020, Jan 3-5). Why Restaurants Fail? A Qualitative Study for Success Factors. *Graduate Education and Graduate Student*

Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism. Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. [Poster presentation]

[10] **Sonmez, D.**, & Talay, I. (2018, Apr 26-29). Trainee/applicant analysis for practical training programs with career management at large-scale hotel chains. 3rd Intl Conference on Innovation and Global Issues in Social Sciences, Antalya, Türkiye. [Poster presentation]

[11] **Sonmez, D.**, & Talay, I. (2018 Apr 20-22). Workforce planning for practical training programs in the hospitality industry via multi-criteria decision making and attrition. 5th Intl Conference on Social Sciences and Education Research, Antalya, Türkiye. [Poster presentation]

HONORS AND AWARDS

[2023-24 Outstanding Doctoral Student Teacher of the Year](#) (nominated by students).

Received certificate of appreciation as a Career Influencer by the University Career Center's First Destination Graduation Survey, 2023-2024.

Received certificate of appreciation from [Thank-A-Teacher Program](#) in Spring 2024.

Nominated for The Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award by Hospitality Management Faculty, University of South Carolina, 2024.

[2022-23 Ph.D. Teacher of the Year](#) (nominated by students).

Received certificate of appreciation from [Thank-A-Teacher Program](#) in Spring 2023.

High Honor Student Certificate, Business Administration, Antalya Bilim University.

1st place in Antalya Bilim University Undergraduate Research Fair with one of her classmates as a two-member team. Research topic: "People's perception on our lifestyle choices: Tattoo and Headscarf", under the supervision of Dr. Vivienne J. Wildes (Ph.D. Man- Environmental Relations, The Pennsylvania State University, 2000).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record: [face-to-face instruction]

- Conference and Meeting Planning: (Fall2024) – 20 students
- Conference and Meeting Planning: (Spring2024) – 45 students
- Conference and Meeting Planning: (Fall2023) – 55 students
- Conference and Meeting Planning: (Spring2023) – 26 students

Co-teacher:

- Topic: Social & Cultural Issues in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry course, with Dr. Scott Taylor Jr. (Fall2024) [hybrid]
- Conference and Meeting Planning course, with Dr. Miyoung Jeong (Fall2022) [face-to-face]

Graduate Teaching Assistant: (Aug 2019 - May 2021) [online]

- Spring2021: Hospitality Info Systems and Technology (Graduate)
- Spring2021: Hospitality Info Systems (Undergraduate)

- Fall2020: Hospitality Info Systems (Undergraduate)
- Fall2020: International Food and Culture (Undergraduate)
- Spring2020: International Food and Culture (Undergraduate)

Volunteer Research Assistant: (Mar - Jun 2016)

- Marketing and Consumer Behavior courses at Antalya Bilim University, Tourism and Hotel Management Department

INVITED TALKS, PANELIST ROLES AND PRESENTATIONS

- **Panelist:** Graduate School's Teaching Assistant Orientation, Topic: *Effective TA Practices* Shared experiences and advice as an experienced graduate teaching assistant, contributing to the TA Training Program, Center for Teaching Excellence, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, Aug. 13, 2024
- **Panelist:** Graduate School's Teaching Assistant Orientation, Topic: *Effective TA Practices* Shared experiences and advice as an experienced graduate teaching assistant, contributing to the TA Training Program, Center for Teaching Excellence, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, Aug. 8, 2024
- **Panelist:** Teaching Panel, Topic: *What can go wrong in the classroom when teaching?* Provided insight on classroom issues for current Ph.D. students, College of Hospitality, Retail and Sport Management, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, Apr. 17, 2024
- **Guest lecturing:** Personnel Organization and Supervision [Recognizing employee contributions with pay] Apr. 3, 2024
- **Guest lecturing:** Topic: Coffee, Tea, & NA-Beverages [Introducing Turkish coffee and Turkish tea tasting], Feb 1-8, 2024
- **Guest lecturing:** Analytical Techniques in Tourism and Hospitality [Qualitative Research Methods], Mar. 11, 2024
- **Guest speaker:** Personnel Organization and Supervision, Mar. 12, 2024
- **Guest speaker:** Personnel Organization and Supervision, Nov. 27, 2023
- **Guest lecturing:** Analytical Techniques in Tourism and Hospitality [Qualitative Research Methods], Oct. 23, 2023
- **Guest lecturing:** Foundations of Tourism, Mar. 13-15, 2023
- **Guest lecturing:** Analytical Techniques in Tourism and Hospitality [Qualitative Research Methods], Mar. 29, 2023
- **Guest lecturing:** Introduction to Beverage Management [Introducing Turkish coffee], Oct. 22, 2022
- **Guest speaker:** Personnel Organization and Supervision, Feb. 27, 2022

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

2024

- **Reviewer** for 9th Annual SECSA ICHRIE Conference
- **Assisted** with SECSA Conference 2024 at USC
- **Reviewer** for ICHRIE 2024 Conference

- **Volunteer:** The Marnie Pearce Professionalism Program-Practical Exam, College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sport Management, University of South Carolina, Mar 26

2023

- **Reviewer** for 8th Annual SECSA ICHRIE Conference.

2022

- **Volunteer:** The Marnie Pearce Professionalism Program-Practical Exam, College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sport Management, University of South Carolina on October 25.
- The 4th International Tourism and Retail Service Management Conference (TRMC2022) Contributed as **Technical Assistant** to the online research sessions, Oct 20

2021

- **Conference Organization Committee Member** (May 11-13, 2021)
Global Conference on Services and Retail Management (GLOSERV 2021) (online)

2019

- **Conference Organization Committee Member** (Sep 30 - Oct 3, 2019)
GLOBE Conference, Istanbul, Türkiye
- **Think-Tank Organization Committee Member** (Apr 22, 2019)
Think tank about the All-inclusive resort system, Antalya, Türkiye

GRANTS

[1] How Meal Kits Fit into Our Lives: Consumers' Perceived Value, Memorable Experience and Behavioral Intention for Meal Kit Service

Role: PI

Grating Agency: School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, UofSC

Amount: USD \$500 **funded**

[2] Redefining Employment Opportunities for People with Intellectual Disabilities in The Hotel Industry

Role: Co-PI

Grating Agency: The Statler Foundation 2024 Grant Program

Amount: USD \$139,000 **funded**

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Certificate of Meritorious Service for valuable service to the Center for Teaching Excellence as a panel contributor and experienced graduate teaching assistant, supporting the Graduate School's TA Orientation and Training Program, 2024

Center for Teaching Excellence [University of South Carolina]

- Preparing Future Faculty Credential, 2024

Center for Teaching Excellence [University of South Carolina]

- Building Supportive Communities: Clery Act and Title IX, 2024

Vector Solutions [University of South Carolina]

- Mental Well-Being for Students, 2022
- Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging for Students, 2022
- Sexual Assault Prevention for Graduate Students, 2022

EVERFI [University of South Carolina]

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace Certificate, 2021

M3 Center for Hospitality Technology & Innovation [University of South Florida]

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Corporate Development Executive Paloma Hotels, Antalya, Türkiye	(Mar 2019 - Jul 2019)
Training and Development Executive Barut Hotels, Antalya, Türkiye	(Sep 2018 - Jan 2019)
Customer Relationship Management Expert HOTECH, Antalya, Türkiye	(Jul 2018 - Sep 2018)
Management Shadowing – Human Resources Barut Hotels, Antalya, Türkiye	(Feb 2018 - Jun 2018)
Human Resources Officer Akra Hotel, Antalya, Türkiye	(Jun 2017 - Aug 2017)
Team-member in Food & Beverage and Guest Relations Rixos Hotel, Antalya, Türkiye	(Jun 2010 - Aug 2010)

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarship from a Professor who worked at University of South Florida (2020-2021). [A faculty grant given to an outstanding graduate student]

Scholarship for High Academic Performance from Antalya Bilim University (2017-2018). [A grant given to an outstanding undergraduate student]