

Course Outline – NRRT 625

Course Number: NRRT 625
Course Title: Communication/Conflict Management in Tourism
Number of Credits: 2
Semesters Offered: Spring
Prerequisites: None
Grading: Traditional

Course Description: Communication has many roles in tourism management, from the most obvious: communicating with current and potential visitors; to more subtle applications such as internal and external stakeholder communication, conflict and change management. This course offers a review of current theoretical approaches to communication study, as well as practical application of communication techniques relevant to tourism management.

Applications of communication theory and practice in tourism include marketing communications, interpretation of natural and cultural resources, agency and organization strategic communications, (both internal and external) conflict management and change leadership through stakeholder engagement.

Communication in tourism management can take the form of mass communication, such as marketing and publicity; as well as communications within groups and between groups and among individuals. Communication between individuals can either be verbal, non-verbal, or implicit.

The study of communication is a complex field and in this course we will attempt to narrow the focus to those communication theories and applications that are most closely associated with tourism management. The course will include online and live lecture, course readings, and weekly exercises designed to help students synthesize the information presented.

Student assessment will take the form of weekly assignments, including discussion posts and responses, written case studies, and a cumulative review for each of the course's two sections.

Course modules will be available through RamCT in two week blocks, with each module being posted a minimum of one week prior to the start of that module's scheduled week. This "gating" is intended to keep the cohort together in terms of material presented so that discussion assignments can be completed with the maximum amount of student interaction.

Course Objectives:

- Develop and understanding of current communication theory and the application of theory in the study of tourism communication.
- Understand the varied roles of communication in tourism management and the techniques available to tourism managers.
- Understand and apply of strategic communication planning principles and situation assessment techniques in the tourism management context.
- Understand potential consequences of making organizational communication choices and employing different conflict management and stakeholder engagement strategies.
- Develop the ability to communicate change and apply organizational communication strategies in the context of tourism industry practice.
- Understand how oral and written communication functions in tourism organizations and develop skills in analyzing situations, synthesizing the course information and utilizing the knowledge for effective communication and conflict management in a tourism organizations.

NRRT 625 Learning Module Descriptions

Section 1. Communication theory, conflict, and Tourism Communication Planning

Module 1: Module one offers an introduction to concepts in communication and a review of communication theory beginning with the earliest theorist that defined the social, psychological, and physiological processes of perception and communication; as well as more recent attempts to streamline the diverse “traditions” and approaches to studying communications between individuals, groups, and within organizations and communities.

Module 2: Module two explores the dimensions of communication that often lead to conflict, including cultural context, gender, socio-economic status, political and philosophical viewpoints. Through interpersonal, intergroup, organizational and societal communication contexts understanding our audience is crucial in managing diverse points of view to diffuse conflict, or manage change.

Module 3: Module three looks more closely at organizational communications, specifically, marketing communications, strategic communications planning and management; as well as situation analysis techniques. It is said that “failing to plan is the same as planning to fail,” and when communicating in the tourism management context, visitor levels, profitability, visitor experiences, as well as visitor impacts and the strategic goals of organizations can either succeed or fail based on sound marketing and communications planning.

Module 4: Module four examines the pace of change in communications technologies, “New Media,” the cultural implications of these changes, and the techniques that communications professionals in tourism can employ to manage change effectively and benefit from a more informed constituency.

Section 2. Managing Conflict through Change Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement

Module 5: Module 5 begins to apply concepts learned in Unit 1, including strategic communications planning, managing organizational communications strategies for change and consensus building, strategic goal and objective identification, stakeholder identification and situation analysis. Through the *Change Handbook*, students will identify a series of potential techniques and processes that may be employed to lead organizations and communities toward consensus and manage change to meet organizational and community goals.

Module 6: Module 6 explores the concept of System Thinking, and whole system engagement in order to facilitate change. Organizations and communities have diverse members that can constituent to issues and outcomes surrounding tourism. Addressing system thinking and using whole system engagement techniques can move diverse groups toward consensus and solicit buy-in from stakeholder groups that can help to ensure that organizational and community goals and objectives are met.

Module 7: Module 7 is a practical, applied experience with facilitation of group interactions. Through developing a better understanding of group dynamics, conflict management in groups, and meeting preparation and facilitation, students will see the potential for success in facilitating the engagement of stakeholder groups with diverse viewpoints. Through positive engagement and facilitation, even the most diverse groups can be lead to consensus and move toward identifying and achieving common goals.

Module 8: Module 8 examines the growing power of communicating an organization’s commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility. Through exploring the underlying concepts and commitments that underlie CSR, and analyzing a series of case studies in tourism-related and other organizations, students will understand how corporation employ this communication tool and to what extent the commitment is real; or merely “green-washing.”