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# ACADEMIC WEEKLY DIGEST

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

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## ORIGINALITY: THE HOLY GRAIL OF TOURISM RESEARCH

Originality is an important goal of research. But we don't know much about what can lead to original research outputs. [Dr Rodriguez](#) and colleagues tried to address this by interviewing 20 highly original academics in the field of tourism. They found that these academics share four main traits: nonconformism, commitment, self-confidence, and interdisciplinarity. Also, individual pathways are shaped by contextual, disciplinary, relational, and individual factors, which means that efforts to replicate originality may constrain rather than enable this.

# ORIGINALITY: THE HOLY GRAIL OF TOURISM RESEARCH

**DR RODRIGUEZ, PROF ALLAN WILLIAMS & DR YOO RI KIM**

Originality is a primary goal of research but social sciences are characterised by a lack of originality. In part this is due to how contemporary academic assessments encourage productivity instead of truly original ideas. However, some authors emerge as highly original researchers. This article focuses on these individuals and proposes that originality is shaped by enabling or constraining multiscale factors ranging from the contextual (sociocultural, policy and research environments), disciplinary and relational (specificities of tourism, academic networks), to individual factors (motivations and personality traits). The interviews with 20 highly original

tourism researchers revealed that these individuals have four core individual characteristics: 1) an unorthodox or different way of seeing the world; 2) a strong commitment and passion for research that spills over into many arenas of life, becoming a “research lifestyle” for some; 3) very strong self-confidence; and 4) an interdisciplinary perspective. These characteristics are only likely to result in original research in certain favourable contexts such as building networks and institutional environments offering openness, freedom and time or autonomy and flexibility to produce original ideas.



## **FURTHER READING:**

Rodríguez Sánchez, I., Mantecón, A., Williams, A. M., Makkonen, T., & Kim, Y. R. (2021). Originality: The Holy Grail of Tourism Research. *Journal of Travel Research*.

Link: [bit.ly/3m9cLdj](https://bit.ly/3m9cLdj)

Originality, both pathways and understandings, are highly complex, situational, temporal and personal which makes it impossible to prescribe a linear journey or set of journeys to produce new ideas or to reconstruct logically the process of discovery. This study has implications for the research system in general since managerial or institutional efforts to “produce” or direct highly original researchers may be constrained, and such enforced managerialism could be a barrier to originality given the emphasis placed on academic freedom to pursue original research ideas.