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# ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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## Zásady pro vypracování

Cílem bakalářské práce je prostudovat výskyt a užití anglických modálních sloves vyjadřujících jistotní modalitu v diskurzu cestovatelských blogů. Studentka nejprve na základě studia relevantní odborné literatury vymezí pojem modalita, představí hlavní kategorie modality a zaměří se na modalitu epistémickou. Podrobně popíše modální slovesa vyjadřující nejistotu mluvčího, tzn. *can/could* a *may/might*, z hlediska morfo-syntaktického a sémantického. Dále charakterizuje diskurz cestovatelských blogů, jeho funkce a typické jazykové prostředky. Na základě analýzy korpusu sestaveného z příspěvků zvoleného diskurzu zmapuje výskyt zkoumaných modálních sloves a bude se věnovat zejména jejich interpretacím v závislosti na kontextových faktorech. Závěrem shrne převažující tendence a zhodnotí užití sloves *can/could* a *may/might* s ohledem na funkce cestovatelských blogů.

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## **ANNOTATION**

This bachelor thesis deals with English modal verbs expressing possibility and uncertainty in travel blog discourse. The thesis presents modality with its three main types together with modal verbs that are analysed later. Modal verbs expressing epistemic possibility and the speaker's uncertainty are the main focus of the thesis. Furthermore, the travel blog discourse is introduced. The analysis of articles collected from various travel blogs focuses on describing contexts in which modal verbs occur with regard to the function of the travel blog discourse.

## **KEYWORDS**

Modality, epistemic, modal verbs, travel blog discourse, possibility, certainty, may, might, can, could

## **NÁZEV**

Epistemická modalita v cestovatelských blozích

## **ANOTACE**

Bakalářská práce se zabývá anglickými modálními slovesy vyjadřujícími možnost a nejistotu v diskurzu cestovního blogu. Práce představuje modalitu s jejími třemi hlavními typy spolu s modálními slovesy, která jsou později analyzována. Modální slovesa vyjadřující epistemickou možnost a nejistotu mluvčího jsou hlavním předmětem práce. Dále je představen diskurz cestovatelského blogu. Analýza článků shromážděných z různých cestovatelských blogů se zaměřuje na popis kontextů, v nichž se modální slovesa vyskytují s ohledem na funkci diskurzu cestovatelského blogu.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Modalita, epistemická, modální slovesa, diskurz cestovatelských blogů, možnost, jistota, may, might, can, could

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## Introduction

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to explore epistemic modality in travel blogs, with particular attention to English modal verbs that express epistemic possibility and the speaker's uncertainty. The research is based on a corpus containing one hundred and fifty instances of epistemic possibility conveyed by modal verbs. The thesis describes the modal verbs from both morpho-syntactic and semantic perspectives and provides an overview of the discourse characteristics typical of travel blogs. Moreover, it also examines the frequency of their occurrences based on an analysis, starting as quantitative and turning into a qualitative one.

The thesis is divided into two main parts: the theoretical background and the practical analysis. The theoretical section begins with a discussion of modality and its definitions as provided by various linguists, including Biber, Palmer, Huddleston and Pullum, Carter and McCarthy, and Leech. It then distinguishes between deontic, epistemic, and dynamic modality, briefly outlining their key differences and providing illustrative examples.

The discussion then moves to explaining the contrast between deontic and epistemic, focusing on the most distinct features between them, but at the same time, their common elements, such as necessity and possibility, which are terms that are dealt with in the following chapter. After the chapter about necessity and possibility, epistemic modality is discussed in further detail, as it is the main focus of this paper. This chapter provides different definitions of the term and other possible ways to express epistemic modality.

The final chapter of the theoretical part introduces modal verbs, starting with a general overview of modal auxiliaries. This includes an examination of their frequency, time reference, subject agreement, forms in questions and negative constructions, aspect, and voice. Special attention is given to the four core modal verbs analysed in this study: *may*, *might*, *can*, and *could*. Each verb is discussed individually, with an emphasis on its most significant and commonly used properties.

The practical part of the thesis is based on a corpus of the four modal verbs that occurred in articles that were collected from different travel blogs. The analysis considers their frequency, time reference, negation, aspect, hypothetical and concessive uses, as well as other relevant features that emerge within the context of travel blog discourse.

## 1. Modality

This chapter deals with modality itself and describes its three main types. The concept of modality is quite vague. However, most linguists propose almost identical definitions. As Palmer quotes Lyons, modality expresses the speaker's opinions and attitude. (1986, 2)

Carter and McCarthy (2006) define modality as the way a speaker or writer expresses their attitude or perspective toward a state of the world. Specifically, modals indicate whether something is considered real or certain or whether it falls within the realm of speculation rather than definite knowledge (Carter and McCarthy 2006, 638).

Modality in language is thus linked to the subjective aspects of an utterance, and it could even be argued that subjectivity serves as a fundamental criterion for modality (Palmer 1986, 16). Palmer goes on to explain the challenges associated with deontic modality, as it tends to be more objective. For example, the sentence *John can speak Italian* suggests John's ability to speak Italian, presenting it as a fact rather than an opinion or attitude (1986, 102).

Similarly, Biber et al. (1999) emphasize the role of modality in qualifying the meaning of a clause to reflect the speaker's assessment of the likelihood that the expressed proposition is true. Both definitions highlight the central function of modality in conveying subjective judgment and the degree of certainty associated with a statement.

This distinction aligns with Huddleston and Pullum's (2005, 53) analysis, which illustrates how modality operates through two interconnected contrasts: factual vs. non-factual and asserted vs. non-asserted. The meanings of these contrasts can be observed in the following examples (2005, 53):

### *Factual vs non-factual*

1. a) *She saw him.*  
b) *She must have seen him.*  
c) *She may have seen him*

### *Asserted vs non-asserted*

2. a) *He leaves today.*  
b) *He must leave today.*  
c) *He can/may leave today.*

The sentence (1a) states her act of seeing him as a definite fact, while (1b) suggests it as an assumption, and (1c) presents it as a possibility. These three examples clearly show factual and non-factual differences, using non-modal (1a) and modal (1b, 1c) verbs. The sentences (2a), (2b), and (2c) show the contrast between asserted (non-modal verb) and non-asserted (modal verbs). The example (2a) functions as a direct assertion, whereas (2b) conveys an obligation, and (2c) expresses permission.

Often, modal verbs are used to express modality, as seen in the examples above. However, adverbs (*perhaps*), adjectives (*It is possible*) or nouns (*There is a possibility*) are other common devices expressing modal meanings. (Huddleston and Pullum 2005, 54) Moreover, there are also certain lexical verbs that express the same kind of meaning as modal verbs, such as *insist*, *permit* or *require*. (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 173)

Leech (2004) divides modality into root (which includes *deontic* and *dynamic*) and epistemic categories to emphasise distinctions in modal meaning. He describes root modality as “the basic type of modality,” referring to limitations or permissions in everyday human situations, such as *obligation*, *permission*, *possibility*, and *requirement* (2004, 136). In contrast, epistemic modality is more concerned with logic, dealing with statements about the world and evaluating their likelihood or truth value (2004, 136).

Building on this distinction, Biber et al. (1999) propose a related classification by dividing modality into intrinsic and extrinsic types, depending on whether or not the modality involves human control over events. They also acknowledge that some modal expressions may overlap, reflecting both intrinsic and extrinsic meanings (1999, 219–220). While Leech’s framework focuses on the modality’s function in human behaviour versus truth evaluation, Biber et al. offer a complementary view that highlights the role of agency and control in modal interpretation.

Despite these varying approaches, a more commonly adopted classification within the English modal system identifies three main types of modalities: epistemic, deontic, and dynamic. According to Palmer (2003), epistemic modality relates to the speaker’s judgment or attitude toward the truth of a proposition (2003, 7). In contrast, deontic and dynamic modalities pertain to the potentiality of events: deontic modality conveys permission or obligation imposed externally, while dynamic modality refers to internal ability or willingness originating from the subject (2003, 7).

To show the differences between all three types of modalities, Palmer (2003) provides the following examples:

3. *They may be in the office.*
4. *The may/can come in now.*
5. *They can run very fast.*

Although only the modal verbs *may* and *can* are used, the difference between the three modalities can be recognised easily. In (3), the epistemic meaning of the sentence states the possibility of them being in the office from the speaker's perspective and based on the information they have. In (4), there is a sign of deontic modality, permitting them to come in. Lastly, in example (5), the dynamic modality shows someone's ability to run very fast.

To summarise, most linguists classify modality into three main types (deontic, epistemic and dynamic), although they may use different terminology. For instance, Leech refers to deontic and dynamic modality as root modality. Despite these variations, this thesis will consistently use the term deontic modality in the following chapters and show the contrast with epistemic modality while examining modals that express epistemic possibility.

## **1.1 Contrast between Epistemic and Deontic**

This chapter aims to highlight the distinction between epistemic and deontic modality. Palmer (1990) explains that these two modalities are relatively easy to differentiate. For example, in the sentences, *John may be there*, and *John must be there now*, the modal auxiliaries express the probability of the statement *John is there* being true. In contrast, in *John may come in now* and *John must come in now*, the modals clearly indicate permission and obligation, respectively, for John to enter (Palmer 1990, 5). The same modal verbs can function in both modalities because epistemic modality, according to historians, developed from deontic modality (Aarts 2011, 277).

To show the evident difference between deontic and epistemic modality, examples by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 54) will be used:

6. a) *He must have overslept.*  
b) *She may be ill.*  
c) *The storm should be over soon.*

7. a) *He must apologise.*
- b) *She may take as many as she needs.*
- c) *We should call the police.*

All the verbs in examples (6) are interpreted epistemically, expressing the possibility, probability, the speaker's uncertainty, and his limitation to facts and knowledge. In (6a), the verb *must* expresses the speaker's certainty, meaning the speaker is not sure that he overslept, but he assumes he did. Example (6b) shows that the speaker is not sure she is, in fact, ill and is only making an assumption. Lastly, example (6c) shows the speaker's inability to say how long it is going to take for the storm to come to an end, but there is an expectation that it will be soon. In contrast, in examples (7), the verbs are interpreted deontically; *must* in (7a) expresses the obligation for him to apologise, *may* in (7b) has the meaning of permission, and *should* in (7c) is "a milder kind of obligation where it is a matter of what is the right thing to do." (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 54)

Epistemic meanings pertain to the truth or falsity of a statement, while deontic modality concerns whether an action occurs or is carried out. (Huddleston and Pullum 2005, 55) This, at a certain level, corresponds to Palmer's (1986) statement that epistemic and deontic modality may appear to have little in common from a semantic perspective, and their only apparent similarity is the speaker's involvement in both.

The two statements proceed to show the ambiguity of sentences, where the interpretation can be either epistemic or deontic:

8. *You must be very tactful.*

(Huddleston and Pullum 2005, 55)

9. *He may come tomorrow.*

(Palmer 1986, 121)

In (8), the statement can be interpreted epistemically, meaning that there is evidence suggesting that you are very tactful. Alternatively, it can be understood deontically, implying that there is an obligation or necessity for you to be tactful, potentially commanding you to act with tact. (Huddleston and Pullum 2005, 55) In (9), the epistemic interpretation suggests a

possibility or a level of certainty of you coming tomorrow. In the deontic interpretation, the meaning is permitting you to come tomorrow.

However, as Huddleston and Pullum (2005) suggest, the connection between the two categories of meaning lies in the concepts of necessity and possibility, which are central to modal logic and relevant to both.

This interplay between necessity and possibility also extends to the role of negation in modality, an issue explored in detail by Palmer. (1986) He presents a significant connection between negation and modality, which involves how negation interacts with possibility and necessity. He also notes the aspects that help differentiate epistemic and deontic modality in English. A key challenge in interpreting negation with modals is the lack of a clear formal distinction between negating the modal itself and negating the main verb. For instance, in English, *can't* and *may not*, when used epistemically, negate the modal, whereas *mustn't* negates the main verb. (1986, 220)

## 1.2 Possibility and Necessity

Necessity and possibility are the central notions of traditional modal logic. (Lyons 1977) As suggested by Leech (2004), they are also so-called *inverses*, or as he explained, “the two senses may be imagined as opposite sides of the same coin.” To illustrate this, the sentence *Someone has to be telling lies (= not everyone can be telling the truth)* demonstrates a comparable relationship between “possibility” and “necessity.” (2004, 82)

However, in epistemic modality, necessity and possibility are concerned with whether something is true or actually the case. In contrast, deontic modality pertains to whether an action takes place or is carried out. (Huddleston and Pullum 2005, 55) Moreover, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) talk about “the strength of commitment to the factuality or actualism of the situation” and differentiate possibility and necessity in terms of modality, dividing it into strong and weak where “necessity involves a strong commitment, possibility a weak one.” (2002, 175)

Palmer's (1990) distinction between *may* and *must* in both epistemic and deontic contexts can be understood through the concepts of possibility and necessity. In epistemic modality, they can be rephrased as “*it is possible/necessary that...*” whereas in deontic modality, they correspond to “*it is possible/necessary for...*” (1990, 9) Using the suggested

paraphrases, it becomes evident that epistemic and deontic possibility and necessity can be negated in two different ways.

Moreover, Palmer (1990) explains that there are logical equivalences between possibility and necessity where, in terms of negation, ‘not necessary’ can be replaced by ‘possible not’ and instead of ‘necessary not’, the ‘not possible’ form can be used. (1990, 9) He also states that the negation of the epistemic and deontic verbs becomes a problem, especially since the English language always puts the negative marker *-n't* or *not* after the modal auxiliary. (2003, 9)

### **1.3 Epistemic modality**

This chapter deals with epistemic modality in more detail. Pullum and Huddleston (2005) introduce epistemic modality as the expression of necessity or possibility based on what is known or believed. The term itself comes from the Greek word for knowledge.” (2005, 54)

Leech (2004, 104-105) suggested that epistemic modality leans more towards logic, dealing with statements about the universe and the possibility that these claims are true or false. Palmer (1990) defines epistemic modality as the easiest type of modality to analyse. Both syntactically and semantically, it stands out most clearly from other types and exhibits the highest level of internal consistency and completeness. (1990, 50)

However, as explained earlier (see 1), modal verbs are not the only possible way to express epistemic modality; instead, it is common to use stance adverbs as well. These epistemic stance adverbs are used to express certainty or doubt (*I'll probably manage.*), to comment on the reality or actuality (*She's actually on her way here.*), to provide evidence (*He reportedly left the building.*), to show the limitations on a proposition (*Students typically need at least three years to complete the program.*), and to convey imprecision (*It was kind of unusual.*) (Biber et al. 2002, 212)

By asserting that epistemic modality pertains to the speaker's opinions and beliefs, it can be argued that it is inherently subjective. In the context of modality, the term subjectivity refers to the speaker's self-expression conveyed through a modal expression (Pietrandrea 2005, 37). Modal forms do not directly indicate the speaker's attitude but rather express it. In other words,

they do not merely state something; instead, they perform an action – they create or convey the speaker's attitude or opinion (2005, 37).

## 2. Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are a subclass of auxiliary verbs. The English modal system comprises nine core modals: *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would* (Biber, Conrad, & Leech 2002). Other verbs, such as *need, dare, and ought to*, are often referred to as marginal modals (Leech 2004; Baas 2011) or as verbs that blur the line between lexical and auxiliary verbs (Huddleston and Pullum 2005). While these marginal modals share certain grammatical features with core modals, they are less central in both frequency and functional range.

Leech (2004, 121) categorises modal auxiliaries according to their frequency in English usage:

- **Very frequent:** *will, would, can, could*
- **Moderately frequent:** *must, should, may, might, have to*
- **Less frequent:** *shall, ought to, need*

Modal verbs exhibit several distinct grammatical features. As auxiliaries, they precede the main verb in a verb phrase (*I can go*), and they are defective: they do not inflect for tense or agree with the subject (*He can go*, not *He cans go*). In negative constructions, modals are followed by *not* (*I cannot go*), and in interrogatives, they precede the subject (*Can you go?*). They are always followed by the bare infinitive form of the main verb (*He can go*, not *He can to go*). Semantically, modals convey meanings related to possibility, necessity, obligation, and prediction (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 174).

Aarts (2011) notes that modal verbs differ in usage across spoken and written contexts and in a comparative table (2011, 280), *will* and *can*, along with their past forms, are shown to dominate over other modals in both registers. Notably, *must* has declined in frequency, particularly in speech.

Leech (2004) identifies *can, may, must, have to, will, and shall* as the main present-tense modal auxiliaries. He points out that grammatically, *have to* is not a true modal since it inflects and can combine with other modals (*We may have to go*) and tenses (*We will have to*

go). Nonetheless, its meaning closely aligns with other core modals expressing necessity (Leech 2004, 121).

The past-tense equivalents of core modals include *could*, *might*, *would*, and *should*, corresponding to *can*, *may*, *will*, and *shall*, respectively. However, as Huddleston and Pullum (2005) explain, these modals often do not behave like typical preterites. Their temporal reference is flexible, and they frequently convey meanings not restricted to past time.

In this light, Leech (2004) avoids the terms ‘present’ and ‘past’ modals, preferring instead primary (e.g. *can*, *may*) and secondary (e.g. *could*, *might*) to reflect their more complex temporal and functional behaviour. For example, so-called ‘present’ modals may refer to both present and future time, while ‘past’ modals can express hypothetical or non-temporal meanings.

Huddleston and Pullum (2005) further assert that modals exist only in their primary forms and do not appear in constructions requiring nonfinite forms, such as the plain form, gerund-participle, or past participle. This is evident when comparing *must* with *have*:

10. a) I must work late tonight.  
b) I will must work late.  
c) I am musting work late.  
d) I've often must work late.
11. a) I have to work late tonight.  
b) I will have to work late.  
c) I am having to work late.  
d) I've often had to work late.

This illustrates how true modals are defective and contrast with semi-modals like *have to*, which behave like lexical verbs.

Another grammatical property of modals is their lack of subject-verb agreement. They have only one present-tense form and do not inflect for third-person singular (*He cans go* is ungrammatical). Aarts (2011) refers to this as defectiveness.

Voice is also relevant when considering epistemic modality. According to Palmer (1990), epistemic modals are typically voice-neutral unless the proposition itself specifies voice. For instance:

12. *John may have seen Mary.*

13. *John may want to see Mary.*

(Plamer 1990, 67)

In (12), the sentence can be passivised (*Mary may have been seen by John*), whereas in (13), such transformation alters the meaning (*Mary wants to be seen by John* implies a different subject of desire).

Regarding verb forms, modal auxiliaries are always followed by a bare infinitive, whether the main verb is lexical or auxiliary (Aarts 2011, 281). Modals themselves are tensed, and thus cannot appear in participle or infinitive forms. When a modal is used, it must come first in the verb group.

The use of the perfect infinitive (have + past participle) after a modal assigns past time to the main verb, while the modal retains its own meaning. For instance, *Voyages could be dangerous* refers to a general past possibility, while *The voyage may have been dangerous* expresses a present judgment about a past event. Leech (2004) notes that "present possibility" is often timeless, akin to scientific or proverbial truths. Therefore, using *could* to express past possibility is somewhat uncommon.

Leech (2004, 158) also explains that the perfect and progressive aspects generally do not combine with modals of ability, permission, or obligation, nor with volitional modals like *will* and *shall*. For example, *You may have seen me yesterday* cannot express permission, only possibility, because one cannot permit a past action.

However, these aspects can occur with epistemic modals to express possibility, necessity, or predictability. In such cases, the modal conveys the speaker's mental stance, while the perfect or progressive aspect applies to the described situation.

Finally, Quirk (1985) distinguishes between auxiliary negation and main verb negation in modal constructions. With epistemic modals, the scope of negation can change the meaning, while the main verb negation modifies the following verb, and the meaning of the modal verb stays the same:

14. *You can't be serious*

= *It is not possible that you are serious (modal negation)*

15. *They may not bother to come if it's wet*

= *It is possible that they will not come (main verb negation)*  
(Quirk 1985, 794-795)

In line with the aim of this thesis, the following chapters will focus specifically on the modal verbs *may*, *might*, *can*, and *could*, particularly in relation to their epistemic uses.

## 2.1 May

The modal verb *may*, along with its past counterpart *might*, is commonly used to express epistemic possibility, indicating that a given proposition is logically or hypothetically possible. This usage is often paraphrased as “It is possible that...” (Aarts 2011), which is supported by Palmer (1990) as well (51).

16. *It may mean he's not normal.* (Aarts 2011, 294)

The example (16) can be paraphrased as *It is possible that it means he's not normal*. It can be clearly seen how *may* expresses epistemic possibility or uncertainty of the speaker.

According to Biber et al. (1999), epistemic *may* is generally used in statements rather than questions, especially when expressing uncertainty (223). The modal is most often used subjectively, where the speaker acknowledges that they do not know whether the proposition is true or false, but presents it as a potential reality. Objectively, it may also reflect general knowledge or shared assumptions rather than the speaker's individual stance. In either case, epistemic *may* usually implies a degree of uncertainty, and this is especially evident when contrasted with unmodalised statements such as “He is ill” versus “He may be ill” (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 182). *May* can be used to express chance or coincidence, as in *It may have been a coincidence*, indicating uncertainty about whether an event happened randomly (Dušková et al. 1994, 191).

*May* can refer to present or future time, often appearing with event verbs like *go*, *lose*, or *become*, which naturally imply future action. Even in the absence of explicit temporal adverbials, such uses suggest futurity (Leech 2004, 124–125):

17. *He may come (tomorrow).* (Dušková et al. 1994, 190)

In example (17), *come* is an event verb, implying that the action is expected to occur at some point. The sentence can be paraphrased as *Perhaps he will come (tomorrow)*, which highlights the clear epistemic meaning of the modal *may* and its reference to the future.

When referring to the past, *may* combines with *have* and a past participle (e.g., *may have missed*) to indicate uncertainty about past events (Dušková et al. 1994, 190–191). Furthermore, to express the present possibility that a past event has occurred, Leech and Svartvik (1975, 146) describe the use of *may* combined with the perfect infinitive. The example *He may have forgotten*, suggests that it is possible the person forgot, although the event is situated in the past.

Although modal verbs lack distinct tense forms, progressive forms are possible in the verb phrase that follows the modal, allowing combinations like *may be phoning* to indicate an ongoing present or near-future action (Alexander 1988, 211):

18. Meg ***may be phoning*** her fiancé. (Alexander 1988, 211)

The use of *may* is treated similarly across sources. Epistemic *may* is generally restricted to declarative sentences and is not typically used in questions; instead, *can* is preferred in interrogative contexts to express similar meanings, such as doubt or possibility (Dušková et al. 1994).

Moreover, Leech (2004) identifies a “quasi-subjunctive” use of *may*, which survives in formal or literary contexts. This includes concessive clauses (e.g., *however unreasonable they may be*), purpose clauses, and exclamatory wishes. In concessive uses, *may* signals a lack of commitment to the truth of the subordinate clause and is semantically neutral, unlike the indicative form, which presumes partial truth. This “quasi-subjunctive” use of *may* resembles its use to express *possibility* and can actually be seen as a variation of that meaning. (126–127)

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) emphasise a similar function, describing *may* as pragmatically concessive in constructions like *It may be expensive, but it's worth every penny*, where *may* signals acknowledgement of a potential objection (182).

Furthermore, Dušková et al. (1994, 191) note that *may* appears in questions only when it expresses permission. Similarly, Leech (2004, 125) maintains that epistemic *may* does not occur in interrogatives. In addition to its core epistemic use, *may* retains some functions related to permission, although this usage is now relatively formal and often replaced by *can* in everyday speech. When used to grant or request permission, *may* is traditionally considered more polite and refined (Leech 2004, 125).

Finally, *may* tends to occur more frequently in written genres such as academic prose, where it marks logical possibility rather than permission (Biber et al. 1999, 491–492). Although

*may* can also be found in conversation, it is relatively rare and usually conveys logical rather than social meanings, such as granting permission.

19. He **may** have been delayed.

20. You **may** stay if you wish.

(Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 178)

The sentence (19) shows a clear example of epistemic possibility interpretation of the verb *may*, where the speaker is speculating about why someone has not arrived; they are not certain, but consider it a possible explanation. In contrast, sentence (20) provides an example of root possibility and the speaker granting permission to stay.

Palmer (1990) further observes that *may* can sometimes be ambiguous between epistemic and root interpretations. For instance, the sentence *If John comes, Mary may leave* could either suggest a possible reaction (epistemic) or an implied permission (deontic), depending on context.

In conclusion, the modal verb *may* is primarily used to express epistemic possibility, indicating that a proposition is or could be true. It typically appears in statements rather than questions and signals present or future possibility, while past reference is conveyed through the perfect infinitive. Although *may* can also express permission, this usage is now largely limited to formal contexts. Additionally, *may* occurs in concessive clauses and quasi-subjunctive constructions, maintaining its association with possibility. In certain contexts, *may* can be ambiguous, expressing either epistemic or root (often deontic) meanings depending on interpretation.

## 2.2 Might

*Might* is frequently used as an alternative to *may* to express epistemic possibility (Biber et al. 1999, 223). Although *might* is usually seen as the more tentative or hypothetical form of *may*, it does not necessarily indicate strong conditional meaning within epistemic contexts. Rather, it mainly reflects a lower level of certainty compared to *may*, which suggests a greater likelihood that something will happen (Palmer 1990, 58).

While *might* is often considered the past tense of *may*, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) argue that *might* only functions as a past tense form in reported speech. More commonly, *might* is used to express tentativeness or unreality. Additionally, Dušková et al. (1994) note that when

*might* is followed by a perfect infinitive, it indicates a possible event in the past, though the context may imply that the event did not actually happen. The distinction between *may* and *might* with a perfect infinitive parallels their difference with the present infinitive: *might* suggests a lower level of certainty about whether the event occurred (Dušková et al. 1994, 192):

21. It ***might*** have been worse.

22. You ***might*** have let me know.

Dušková et al. (1994) then explain that this contrast in probability becomes particularly relevant when the context implies that the event did not happen. In such cases, *might* with a perfect infinitive is typically used, as it aligns with its function in conditional constructions referring to past unrealised events. In contrast, *may* with a perfect infinitive leaves the question of whether the event occurred unresolved. *Might* can also refer to present or future situations, as shown in the following examples:

23. Kittery ***might*** be best known for its outlet shopping, but it also has a fascinating history dating back to 1647, making it Maine's oldest town. (*Corpus Might, Example 1*)

= It is possible that Kittery is best known for its outlet shopping, but...

24. Sure, very rarely the prices ***might*** drop if you wait. (*Corpus Might, Example 17*)

= It is possible that the prices will drop if you wait.

In (23), the verb *might* refers to an ongoing or habitual possibility happening in the present. At the same time, in (24), it is apparent that *might* refers to a specific future situation, and it suggests a possibility that could happen later.

Moreover, *might* appears in hypothetical sentences, which are used to soften the meaning of the non-hypothetical auxiliary when it could be perceived as too assertive or straightforward. (Leech 2004, 199) In hypothetical permission, *might* is occasionally used as a more polite alternative to *may* in first-person requests (*Might I ask you for your opinion?*). The primary effect of the hypothetical form in this context is that the speaker does not anticipate their request being granted. However, this also illustrates the softening of the hypothetical meaning: individuals often use *could* and *might* as a matter of politeness, even when they expect their requests to be fulfilled. (2004, 199) Additionally, while *might* (expressing possibility) is rarely used in interrogative structures, it occasionally appears in questions, such as: *Might it have been left at the bus station?* (Leech 2004, 201)

As Dušková et al. (1994) suggest, the modal verb *might* can be used instead of *may* to sound more polite when asking for permission or making a request, expressing root modality. For instance, saying *Might I suggest...* is a gentler and more respectful way to propose something. However, in regular statements, excluding questions, *might* is not about giving permission. Instead, it is used to suggest something or make a polite offer. For example, *We might hire a car* is a way of proposing the idea gently, not seeking permission. (1994, 193) To illustrate the difference:

25. He may go there now. = *May* gives permission.

26. He might go there now. = *Might* suggests the action or proposes it politely.

To summarise, the modal verb *might* is primarily used to express epistemic possibility, typically indicating a lower degree of certainty than *may*. While often regarded as the past tense of *may*, *might* mainly functions to signal tentativeness or unreality rather than past time, except in reported speech. When followed by a perfect infinitive, *might* refers to possible past events, often implying they did not occur. It can also denote present or future possibility and appears in hypothetical contexts to soften statements or requests. In such cases, *might* serves a polite, indirect function, sometimes expressing root modality. Though rarely used in questions, it can occur in interrogative structures to suggest cautious speculation.

### 2.3 Can

The theoretical possibility (possibility of the idea) expressed by *can* is considered weaker than the factual possibility (possibility of the fact) expressed by *may*. In general, when making habitual statements about what is possible, *can* often means something like *sometimes*, implying a non-epistemic context.

27. *The railways may be improved.*

28. *The railways can be improved.*

(Leech and Svartvik 1994, 145)

In the examples, sentence (27) expresses epistemic possibility, with *may* indicating the speaker's assessment of a potential event based on available information or inference. It conveys uncertainty or the possibility that improvement will occur. Sentence (28) conveys a non-epistemic possibility that improvement is realistically or practically possible. This usage

does not indicate the speaker's evaluation of the likelihood of improvement but simply suggests that making improvements is within the realm of what can be done. (1994, 146)

Similarly, Dušková et al. (1994) offer a related view, emphasising that when *can* expresses possibility, it does not always imply ability but rather compatibility with the nature of the action. They observe that *can* can sometimes refer to the future, similarly to *may*. However, they present a slightly different distinction: *can* typically refers to theoretical possibility, while *may* indicates factual possibility. Despite this, they acknowledge that these differences often blur, and in many contexts, the two modals can be interchangeable. Stylistically, *may* is more common in formal language, while *can* tends to be more neutral. (Dušková et al. 1994, 186)

Compared to factual *may*, the modal auxiliary *can* is considered theoretical. As an illustration, it was observed that while the statement *This illness can be fatal* (= *It is possible for this illness to result in death*) presents fatality as a general concept, *This illness may be fatal* (= *It is possible that this illness will result in death*) frames fatality as a potential reality, conveying a more substantial and more alarming implication. (Leech 2004, 180)

Together, these perspectives reveal that although *can* and *may* both express possibility, *can* is generally linked to broader, habitual, or theoretical potential, while *may* tends to indicate more immediate, factual, or specific possibilities. However, the boundaries between these uses are flexible, and contextual and stylistic factors often influence the choice between them.

Biber et al. (1999) note that *can* expressing epistemic possibility frequently occurs in questions and negative statements, where it can be paraphrased similarly to *may* and *might* as “It is possible that” followed by an infinitive clause, or “It will be possible” when referring to future possibilities. For example:

29. *If it's raining tomorrow, the sports can take place indoors.*

*= It is possible the sports will take place indoors.*

*(Biber et al. 1999, 221)*

30. *The rumour can be true.*

*(Winiharti 2012, 538)*

Complementing this, Dušková et al. (1994) highlight that *can* in questions often functions as a polite way to make requests.

When expressing impossibility in the present or general sense, Leech and Svartvik (1994) explain that the modal verbs *cannot* or *can't* are typically used, whereas *may not* is generally

avoided in such contexts. For example, the sentence *He can't be working* expresses a strong certainty that the person is not working. On the other hand, *He may not be working* carries a different implication, suggesting that it is possible he is not working rather than conveying impossibility. (1994, 146)

Regarding the expression of possibility related to past time, Leech and Svartvik note that the modal *could* is used to indicate that something was possible or permitted in the past. For instance:

31. *In those days, you could be sentenced to death for a small crime.*

= *demonstrates a past ability or permission.*

(Leech and Svartvik 1975, 146)

Compared to factual *may*, the modal auxiliary *can* is considered theoretical. As an illustration, it was observed that while the statement *This illness can be fatal* (= *It is possible for this illness to result in death*) presents fatality as a general concept, *This illness may be fatal* (= *It is possible that this illness will result in death*) frames fatality as a potential reality, conveying a more substantial and more alarming implication. (Leech 2004, 180) In general, when making habitual statements about what is possible, *can* often means something like *sometimes*, implying a non-epistemic context.

Huschová (2008, 62) discusses the debated status of the modal verb *can* in relation to epistemic modality, noting that scholars differ in their interpretations. She cites authors such as Papafragou (2000) and Perkins (1983), who question whether *can* has any genuine epistemic use.

In contrast, other linguists, including Leech (2004) and Palmer (1990), recognize two specific epistemic uses of *can*, particularly in negative and interrogative constructions. For example, in questions like "*Can it be true?*", *can* is seen as expressing epistemic possibility, reflecting the speaker's uncertainty about the truth of the proposition.

Coates (as cited in Huschová 2008, 62) suggests that potential new instances of epistemic *can* are likely to appear in constructions featuring an inanimate subject and a stative verb, particularly in contexts that clearly favor an interpretation based on epistemic possibility.

In summary, while both *can* and *may* both serve to express possibility, they differ in the nature and degree of possibility they typically convey. *Can* is generally associated with theoretical, habitual, or general potential, often highlighting what is practically or logically achievable rather than what is probable. In contrast, *may* tends to signal specific or factual possibility and is therefore more commonly used to express epistemic modality. Although *can* is usually non-epistemic, it can signal epistemic meaning in specific contexts, particularly in interrogative and negative constructions, where it may reflect the speaker's uncertainty or speculation. Scholars remain divided on the extent to which *can* genuinely functions epistemically, but recent research suggests that it may take on this role when certain syntactic and contextual conditions are met. Overall, *may* is preferred when expressing the speaker's judgment about likelihood, especially in formal registers, while *can* tends to indicate broader, more neutral potential. The distinction between them, however, is not always clear-cut and is often shaped by context and pragmatic considerations.

## 2.4 Could

*Could* functions similarly to *can* and carries two primary uses: as a past tense form or as a conditional expressing present or future possibility. (Dušková et al. 1994, 189) When used to indicate the past, its exact meaning often depends on the surrounding context. In contrast, the conditional sense of *could* is commonly found in polite requests or hypothetical scenarios expressed in the present tense. (1994, 189)

According to Huschová (2008), epistemic *could* is nonfactive and reflects the speaker's uncertainty about the truth of the proposition. Its usage appears to be limited, as it most frequently occurs with a third-person subject and the verb *be*. (2008, 71)

32. *A private speedboat tour like this will set you back 4 million Rupiah (~\$250 USD) for the roundtrip, but it's quicker than the ferry, and it **could** be economical if you're travelling with friends to share the boat cost. (Corpus Could, Example 1)*

As Dušková et al. (1994) state, to refer to actions completed in the past, we use *could have* followed by a perfect infinitive. This construction can suggest that something was possible but might or might not have actually occurred. In such cases, *could have* tends to be a more cautious alternative to *may have*. Its exact meaning depends heavily on the context; sometimes it indicates an open possibility, while other times it implies that the event did not take place.

Depending on the context, *could* with the perfect infinitive expresses both epistemic and non-epistemic modality, which can be seen in these examples:

33. *We looked everywhere. – You couldn't have.*

34. *You couldn't have done more.*

(Dušková et al. 1994, 190)

In (34), *could* followed by the perfect infinitive conveys non-epistemic modality. This means that the action was not within the person's ability or power, meaning they were not capable of doing more. In contrast, in (33) *could* expresses epistemic modality, where it reflects the speaker's judgement about the likelihood of the action having happened. It suggests a strong assumption that something must have been missed, and it is considered impossible that you actually looked everywhere. (1994, 190)

In its hypothetical usage, *could* frequently conveys a sense of tentative possibility. It indicates that something is possible, yet the likelihood of it occurring is relatively low. This use reflects a cautious or uncertain stance, where the event or situation is considered feasible but not highly probable (Leech and Svartvik 1994, 146):

35. *He could have been telling lies.*

= *It is just possible that he was/has been telling lies.*

(Leech and Svartvik 1994, 146)

In addition to these uses, *could* is often employed in polite requests to make statements less direct (Dušková et al. 1994, 189–190). Similarly, Biber et al. (1999) note that *could* is frequently used in a quasi-imperative way to suggest a course of action, and that politeness can be enhanced by using *could* or adding conditional clauses such as *if you like* (1999, 222).

To conclude, the modal verb *could* exhibits a wide range of functions, making it a versatile element in English grammar. It operates as the past form of *can*, a marker of hypothetical or conditional meaning, and a means of expressing politeness. When referring to the past, *could* often requires contextual interpretation, especially when combined with the perfect infinitive, where it may indicate either a possibility that did not materialise or a judgment about the likelihood of an event. The epistemic use of *could* is particularly notable for its nonfactive nature, signalling the speaker's uncertainty or limited confidence in the truth of a proposition. This use is relatively restricted and typically appears with third-person subjects and the verb *be*. Additionally, *could* functions in polite requests and suggestions, softening

directives and offering alternatives in a socially appropriate manner. Overall, *could* plays a crucial role in expressing various shades of meaning, from past ability to hypothetical and epistemic possibility, as well as in maintaining interpersonal politeness.

### **3. Electronic Discourse – Travel Blogs**

Electronic discourse plays a vital role in shaping modern communication, influencing various domains of life, including education and foreign language learning. English, as the most widely spoken global language, owes much of its prominence to its dominance in international media and commerce (AbuSa'aleek 2014, 135).

Defined by Davis and Brewer (1997), electronic discourse encompasses the linguistic practices used in digital communication. A key characteristic is that delayed interactivity responses may range from immediate replies to those occurring days or weeks later. These digital texts often resemble extended notes: more developed than comments, yet shorter and less formal than essays. Analysing such texts reveals recurring themes and narrative structures (Davis and Brewer 1997, 1–5).

One prominent example of electronic discourse is the travel blog. Puhringer and Taylor (2008) describe travel blogs as personal entries that document ongoing, past, or planned journeys. Often structured around themes such as itineraries or major milestones, these blogs resemble online diaries and are typically intended to inform friends and family about the blogger's experiences. Beyond this, they serve as platforms for expressing thoughts, emotions, and perceptions that might not emerge in formal research methods like interviews (as cited in Banyai and Glover 2012, 268).

According to Azariah (2017), travel writing has long existed in various formats from diaries and exploration accounts to commercial travel literature like brochures and guidebooks. With the rise of social media platforms, travellers now more easily share personal experiences through blogs, microblogs, photo-sharing sites, and mobile applications (2017, 1).

In their study of travel blogs, Bosangit, McCabe, and Hibbert (2016) identify five main types of discourse that frequently appear in these narratives:

- Stories of Risk and Challenges – Narratives involving the acceptance or confrontation of danger, reflecting tourists' desire for adventure and excitement (2016, 6).

- Accounts of Learning and Reflection – Bloggers share discoveries about destinations and cultures, often contextualised with prior knowledge or personal experience (2016, 7).
- Accounts of Novelty and Difference – These stories highlight new and unfamiliar experiences shaped by local contexts and interactions with residents (2016, 8).
- Accounts of Self-expansion – These involve social interaction and personal growth. Travellers form connections that lead them to incorporate aspects of others’ perspectives and identities into their own (2016, 8).
- Stories of Escape – Though less frequent, these narratives describe moments when bloggers temporarily withdraw from travel itself, offering insight into the need for rest or reflection (2016, 9).

In conclusion, travel blogs, as a form of electronic discourse, allow individuals to document and share their travel experiences in personal and creative ways. They represent a digital evolution of traditional travel writing, providing rich insights into tourists' emotions, perceptions, and interactions. The recurring themes of adventure, reflection, cultural novelty, personal growth, and escape highlight the diversity and depth of these narratives.

Because travel blogs are inherently subjective and centred on the personal experiences, observations, and impressions of the blogger, they naturally lend themselves to expressions of uncertainty, assumption, or speculation. As bloggers recount their journeys, describe unfamiliar places, or provide recommendations, they often rely on modal verbs to indicate varying degrees of certainty or possibility. Therefore, it is expected that travel blogs will feature modal verbs expressing epistemic possibility, such as *may*, *might*, *can* or *could*, as these forms allow writers to convey tentative judgments, personal beliefs, or interpretations of events.

This thesis specifically examines how often epistemic modal verbs appear in travel blog discourse and how they are used, with the goal of exploring the ways in which bloggers convey their attitudes, degree of certainty, and knowledge through language.

#### 4. Practical Part

The aim of the practical part was to create a corpus of one hundred and fifty findings of modal verbs (*may, might, can* and *could*) expressing epistemic possibility and uncertainty in the travel blog discourse and to analyse their different properties. The main and most important idea was to find out which modal appears most frequently in travel blogs and to comment on why it is so. The analysed examples were collected from more than twenty articles about various themes, which were taken from more than ten different travel blogs.

The analysis of modal verbs begins with a quantitative overview, followed by a qualitative investigation focusing on the factors that contribute to their epistemic meaning. In addition, the discourse functions and communicative purposes of travel blogs are examined to provide contextual insight into the use of epistemic modality.

The articles were selected randomly without prioritising any specific genre and reviewed to identify instances of epistemic possibility expressed by the four modals. A thorough review of selected travel blog articles was conducted to identify and extract all instances of the modal verbs *may, might, can, and could* used to express epistemic modality for analysis in the practical part of the thesis. Corpus was then divided into four smaller sub-corpora based on each modal analysed, named *May, Might, Can* and *Could*. The findings for each are numbered separately, and each article is quoted. Therefore, there is a list of references from which the travel blogs' articles were taken. To maintain clarity and prevent the analysis from becoming overly complex or disorganised, tables were created for some of the investigated properties.

The practical part of the thesis is divided into four main sections. The first section provides a quantitative overview of the frequency of the modal verbs found in the selected travel blog texts. The second section is dedicated to the analysis of the verbs *may* and *might* and their grammatical properties. The two verbs are analysed together as they turned out to be the most frequently used in travel blogs. Their section is divided into five sub-sections, each focusing on a different grammatical property: time reference, negation, aspect, concessive and hypothetical use. The third section focuses on the use of *can* and *could* expressing epistemic possibility and the last section will show indeterminate cases of the modal verbs.

Every article has been examined from the same perspective. The first analysed factor was the time reference, whether the modals refer to the past, present or future. This part of the analysis showed what the usual time reference is and, in addition, it provides an explanation of how to tell the correct one based on other verbs and their tense form.

Negation of the modal auxiliaries is analysed with the purpose of not only showing the frequency, but also how the scope shifts when different modals appear. This offered a better understanding of the modals' features and the specifics of travel blog discourse. The analysis then examined aspects, hypothetical meaning and concessive use to highlight typical contexts of epistemic usage. As for *can* and *could*, the analysis focuses on the use of *can* and *could* expressing epistemic possibility based on specific factors and contexts, which were discussed earlier (see 2.3 and 2.4).

#### 4.1 Frequency of the Modals

The first investigation of epistemic modal verbs in travel blogs provides a general overview of how often the selected epistemic modals (*may*, *might*, *can* and *could*) appear throughout the collected travel blog entries. Observing their frequency helps determine which modals are commonly used to express epistemic possibility in this specific discourse. The results of this analysis offer a useful starting point for further qualitative analysis, where the focus shifts to examining the contextual factors influencing their usage and interpretation in more detail.

**Table 1 – Frequency of the Modals**

<b>Modal verb</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>May</b>	74	49.3%
<b>Might</b>	61	40.7%
<b>Can</b>	5	3.3%
<b>Could</b>	10	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	150	100%

As presented in Table 1, the modal verbs *may* and *might* dominate the data, accounting for a combined 90% of occurrences (49.3% and 40.7% respectively). In contrast, *can* and *could* occur much less frequently (3.3% and 6.7%). Given their lower frequency in expressing epistemic modality, *can* and *could* predominantly convey non-epistemic meanings, such as ability or permission in travel blog discourse. This suggests that these modals serve different communicative functions compared to *may* and *might*, which are more commonly used to express epistemic possibility and uncertainty.

## 4.2 May and Might

This chapter analyses the epistemic use of the modal verbs *may* and *might* in selected travel blog articles. The focus is on five key categories: time reference, negation, aspect, and hypothetical and concessive constructions. Hypothetical use was analysed only for the verb *might*, while concessive use for both of the modals. Examples of *may* and *might* were extracted from authentic texts and classified according to these categories to examine how epistemic modality is expressed across different grammatical contexts. The analysis aims to highlight the variability and function of *may* and *might* within the travel blog genre and its role in conveying possibility and uncertainty.

### 4.2.1 Time reference

The analysis of the modal verbs *may* and *might* in travel blog discourse highlights how epistemic modality interacts with temporal reference. Both modals are primarily used to express possibility, but they differ subtly in frequency and distribution across time frames.

Table 2 – Time reference

	Present		Future		Past		Indeterminate	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>May (74)</b>	13	17.6%	43	58.1%	1	1.4%	17	23%
<b>Might (61)</b>	19	31.3%	33	54.1%	2	3.3%	7	11.5%

The analysis of the modal verb *may* reveals a strong tendency to express epistemic possibility primarily with future time reference. Out of 74 instances, 43 cases (58.1%) express possibility in relation to upcoming events or experiences. This aligns well with the nature of travel blogs, where authors often speculate or make predictions about upcoming experiences or conditions.

36. You may have to wait a few days but you'll get a spot much cheaper than if you pre-book your tour. (Corpus May, Example 8)

37. You may see some countries that are beautiful, but also have a lot of poverty. (Corpus May, Example 40)

In both examples, *may* expresses epistemic possibility related to future events. In (1), the speaker refers to a potential situation that could happen later, indicating a future condition or outcome. The use of the future tense verb phrase “you’ll get” reinforces the forward-looking

nature of the possibility expressed by *may*. Similarly, in (2), the modal verb *may* suggests a possibility that travellers might encounter in upcoming experiences. The context implies a prospective observation rather than a current or past one, marking the epistemic meaning of *may* as oriented toward the future.

Both cases illustrate how *may* functions to convey uncertainty about events or situations that have not yet occurred, which is typical in travel blogs where writers discuss potential experiences.

The modal *might* similarly leans toward a future-oriented use, with 33 out of 61 instances (54.1%) referring to anticipated or imagined outcomes. However, *might* often adds a slightly more speculative tone, implying a greater degree of distance, doubt, or contingency than *may*.

38. *Not as many tourists know about it, so you **might** have the place all to yourself. (Corpus Might, Example 5)*

39. *You **might** find that you don't need as many household items. (Corpus Might, Example 39)*

In these examples (38, 39), *might* projects hypothetical or possible developments into the future. It communicates a sense of uncertainty that is appropriate for advice, warnings, or general tips, common functions in travel writing. While similar to *may*, *might* seems to soften the likelihood or assertiveness of the claim, aligning with the more tentative and informal tone often found in blog discourse.

When it comes to present time reference, *might* occurs more frequently than *may*: 31.3% versus 17.6%. This suggests that *might* is somewhat more flexible in discussing ongoing states, conditions, or mental processes.

40. *That's probably because they offer good information that resonates with readers - and it **might** hint as to what kinds of things they'd like to read more often too. (Corpus Might, Example 38)*

41. *It **might** translate into what I like to call a "career minimalist." (Corpus Might, Example 41)*

These sentences (40, 41) illustrate how *might* can express a possibility that applies at the moment of speaking or writing. The use of present reference with *might* often focuses on mental states, interpretations, or immediate evaluations, highlighting its role in hedging

subjective statements. Moreover, the use of other verbs in the sentence in the present time is a subtle hint that the modal also refers to the present.

By contrast, *may* is less commonly associated with present reference. It accounts for 17.6% of occurrences, showing that *may* is also used to express current possibilities or states of affairs, though less frequently.

42. *It **may** sound overly simplistic to say that getting enough sleep is vital to avoiding travel fatigue. (Corpus May, Example 34)*

43. *The biggest question you **may** have on your mind is “Who will read my travel blog?” (Corpus May, Example 7)*

In both examples, *may* refers to the present by expressing a current possibility or state of mind. In (42), *may* indicates a present uncertainty about how the statement is perceived at the moment. Similarly, in (43), *may* conveys a present potential concern that could currently occupy the reader’s thoughts. Thus, in both cases, *may* serves to express epistemic modality related to present possibilities or perceptions.

The past is rarely invoked by either modal. Only 3.3% of *might* cases and 1.4% of *may* occurrences express epistemic possibility regarding past events. These instances typically feature perfect constructions, such as *may have* or *might have*, and signal doubt about whether something occurred in the past.

44. *You **may** have been told to cover your hand when keying in your PIN number at an ATM. (Corpus May, Example 23)*

45. *You **might** not have realized how powerful your mobile phone’s language-learning tool can be. (Corpus Might, Example 59)*

46. *Research gives you ideas that you **might** not have thought of otherwise. (Corpus Might, Example 36)*

Here, the use of the perfect aspect clearly marks these statements as concerning the past. The epistemic use remains intact, as the speaker does not claim knowledge but rather suggests possible past experiences.

In the example (44), *may* refers to the past by expressing a possibility or uncertainty about something that could have happened before the moment of speaking. The phrase “may have been told” indicates that the speaker is not certain whether the listener was previously advised to cover their hand when entering their PIN. This use of *may* with the perfect aspect (“have been told”) signals epistemic modality related to a past event or action, highlighting a tentative assumption about past information or experience.

Lastly, a noteworthy portion of both modals falls into the category of indeterminate time reference: 11.5% for *might* and 23% for *may*. These are cases where the context does not clearly signal whether the possibility relates to the present or future.

47. *It's important to note that different airlines **may** have additional restrictions, so it's always a good idea to check with your specific airline before packing. (Corpus May, Example 63)*

48. *Anyone wishing to wake up to a sea breeze drifting in through the window **might** consider a property along the coast. (Corpus Might, Example 29)*

In example (47), the modal verb *may* expresses epistemic possibility with an indeterminate time reference. This is because the situations described could apply to the present or arise in the future, depending on when the reader encounters them. The phrase “disputes you may have” could refer to ongoing or potential future disputes, while “airlines may have additional restrictions” suggests rules that could currently exist or be introduced later. In example (48), the modal *might* is similarly ambiguous in terms of timing. The recommendation to “consider a property along the coast” could relate to a current option available to the reader or to a future scenario being contemplated.

Such indeterminate examples demonstrate how modal verbs in travel blogs often address readers in a generalised or timeless manner. The uncertainty in time reference reflects the genre’s tendency to provide advice that is broadly applicable, regardless of when the reader engages with the text.

In summary, both *may* and *might* predominantly signal epistemic possibility about the future, a reflection of travel blogs’ forward-facing orientation. However, *might* is more frequently used with present time reference and displays slightly greater modal distancing. It also tends to be more conversational and flexible in tone, fitting seamlessly into both

personal anecdotes and general advice. The rare past uses of both modals show that epistemic evaluations of past events are not a primary concern in travel discourse. Finally, indeterminate time references highlight the context-dependent and sometimes ambiguous temporal scope of epistemic modality in this genre.

#### 4.2.2 Negation

The negation of the modal verbs *may* and *might* plays a significant role in expressing epistemic modality by altering the scope of possibility. In travel blog discourse, negated *may* and *might* constructions often indicate that a particular event or state is possible but not certain to occur.

Table 3 – Negation

	Negation	
	Number	Percentage
<b>May (74)</b>	11	14.9%
<b>Might (61)</b>	13	21.3%

Negated forms of *may* account for approximately 14.9% of all its occurrences in the corpus, while *might* is negated in over 21.3% of cases. This indicates that while the majority of *may* and *might* instances express positive epistemic possibility, a notable portion involves negation, which serves to convey uncertainty about the non-occurrence of an event or situation.

49. *Harder drugs are especially risky — it's a good way to get in trouble with the police, who **may not** be as forgiving (or even law-abiding) as authorities back home. (Corpus May, Example 26)*

*= It is possible that the police will not be as forgiving.*

50. *Adventure travelers spend a lot of time in the mountains, deserts, and jungles. Maybe they like to hitchhike, and prefer visiting more remote destinations where they **may not** have a roof to sleep under. (Corpus May, Example 30)*

*= It is possible that that they will not have a roof to sleep under.*

These examples illustrate how negation interacts with the modal verb *may* to shift the scope of possibility. In example (49), the negation applies to the police's behaviour, expressing that it is possible the police are not forgiving or law-abiding, but this is not certain. Similarly, in example (50), *may not* conveys the possibility of lacking shelter, highlighting an uncertain

or potentially negative situation. In both cases, negation with *may* opens up the chance that something undesirable could happen, without asserting it as a definite fact.

51. *If you think you **might not** have Wi-Fi or cell phone service during your trip, write the number down in your phone on a notes app just to be safe. (Corpus Might, Example 2)*

*= If you think it is possible you will not have Wi-Fi...*

52. *Things **might not** always go your way. (Corpus Might, Example 42)*

*= It is possible things will not always go your way.*

In example (51), the negation applies to the availability of connectivity, expressing that it is possible the traveller will not have Wi-Fi or cell phone service during the trip, though this is not certain. Similarly, in example (52), *might not* conveys the possibility that circumstances will not always be favorable, emphasising an uncertain or potentially negative outcome. In both cases, the use of negation with *might* serves to highlight possible obstacles or setbacks without presenting them as definite, maintaining the cautious and advisory tone typical of travel blog discourse.

The use of negated *may* and *might* adds an important layer to epistemic modality in travel blog discourse. These forms are often employed to indicate that an event or situation is uncertain and possibly will not happen, especially in contexts involving traveler warnings, unpredictable conditions, or tentative forecasts. This reflects the typical style of travel blogs, which combine personal insights with general guidance while acknowledging that exceptions and unexpected outcomes are always possible.

### 4.2.3 Aspect

Table 4 - Aspect

	Progressive Aspect		Perfective Aspect	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>May (74)</b>	2	3.2%	1	1.6%
<b>Might (61)</b>	4	6.6%	2	3.3%

The table shows that epistemic uses of *may* and *might* rarely appear with the progressive or perfective aspect. In the case of *may*, only 3.2% of instances occur in the progressive and 1.6%

in the perfective aspect. The modal verb *might* occurs slightly more frequently with these aspects: 6.6% of the time with the progressive, and 3.3% with the perfective.

53. *In many places, making direct eye contact with potential threats can help ward off an attack, ensuring they notice you see them and what they **may** be planning. (Corpus May, Example 22)*

= *What they will possibly be planning.*

54. *Whether it's free activities nearby, family-friendly spots, or even local festivals and events that **may** be going on at the time, the tourism office is there to point you in the right direction. (Corpus May, Example 11)*

= *Events that will possibly be going on...*

In both (53, 54), the progressive aspect suggests an ongoing or evolving uncertainty or possibility about a situation. It also suggests that the likelihood of an event or action happening might change or develop in the future.

Examples of the progressive aspect with *might* similarly convey this sense of uncertainty about an action in progress:

55. *Although you **might** not be sipping on liquid courage, don't worry – there's no need to be afraid when going on a ghost tour. (Corpus Might, Example 30)*

56. *Remember that you **might** be spending a significant amount of time off your ship during port days. (Corpus Might, Example 44)*

These uses (55, 56) illustrate how the progressive aspect with *might* emphasise temporary or ongoing states that are not guaranteed to happen, but are plausible under certain conditions.

However, it is not very common for travel bloggers to use progressive aspects with modal verbs in their articles, as they often focus on providing practical advice to readers and giving clear and immediate recommendations.

Examples of the perfective aspect won't be shown as they were already mentioned in the chapter about time reference, and some were used as examples for past-time reference (see 4.2.1)

#### 4.2.4 Concessive Use

According to the corpus, *may* appeared in concessive clauses with 15 occurrences, which is a very common usage of the modal verb. Concessive clauses are used by writers or speakers to acknowledge a contrast or potential contradiction while maintaining a degree of uncertainty.

57. It **may** seem like the world is a dangerous place, with trouble lurking around every corner, **but** that's only because fear sells. (Corpus May, Example 3)

= *Although the world seems like a dangerous place...*

58. You **may** have to wait a few days **but** you'll get a spot much cheaper than if you pre-book your tour. (Corpus May, Example 8)

= *Although you perhaps will have to wait a few days...*

In both examples, the conjunction *but* introduces a different point of view that contrasts with the initial statement, which the speaker presents as a fact. In example (57), the statement that the world is a dangerous place is given as a fact, not just an opinion. The second part, introduced by *but*, challenges this idea by suggesting that the way people perceive danger is often influenced by fear-based stories in society.

Similarly, in example (58), the claim that perhaps you will have to wait for days is presented as something definite, not just a possible outcome. However, the clause after *but* shifts the focus to a more positive side, pointing out the chance to find a cheaper spot. In both cases, *but* changes the focus from the initial statement to a more hopeful or encouraging view, showing how concessive clauses can take a factual statement and follow it up with a contrasting idea to offer clarification or reassurance.

In conclusion, the concessive use of the modal verb *may* in travel blogs is a way for authors or speakers to communicate advice, suggestions, and warnings in a manner that acknowledges uncertainty, possibility, and potential outcomes, making the content more engaging and realistic. Moreover, concessive use in travel blogs can also reflect a personal experience of the speaker where the advice is framed as something that happened to them, and they are warning or advising the reader to be prepared for the same possible outcome.

Although concessive use is mostly common for the modal verb *may*, concessive uses of *might* were also attested in the corpus, typically appearing in constructions where a possibility is acknowledged but contrasted or downplayed by a more prominent or opposing idea. These structures often include discourse markers such as *but*, *although*, or *however*, and are common in travel blog discourse, where writers aim to present balanced perspectives, recognising potential drawbacks while ultimately encouraging positive experiences.

59. Kittery ***might*** be best known for its outlet shopping, but it also has a fascinating history dating back to 1647. (*Corpus Might, Example 1*)

60. Changing your mindset ***might*** not be a traditional budget tip, but it's important nonetheless. (*Corpus Might, Example 3*)

In (59), the writer concedes the town's commercial reputation (“might be best known”) but immediately counters it with a more substantial or meaningful attribute, reinforcing the historical significance of the place. Similarly, in (60) the modal *might* acknowledges a deviation from reader expectations, only to reaffirm the value of the advice. This rhetorical use of *might* supports a tone that is both considerate and persuasive, presenting potential objections while maintaining a confident stance.

In travel blogs, such concessive structures allow writers to maintain credibility and relatability, showing awareness of reader assumptions while guiding them toward alternative viewpoints or recommendations. The concessive use of *might* thus functions as a pragmatic tool to balance uncertainty with guidance, often softening potentially controversial or unexpected suggestions.

#### 4.2.5 Hypothetical Use

Hypothetical use is merely restricted for *might* and according to the corpus, a substantial portion of *might* occurrences in the travel blog corpus function within conditional constructions, often using explicit if-clauses. Out of the 61 annotated examples, 9 instances (approximately 14.8%) illustrate the hypothetical use of *might* embedded in such conditional structures. These examples highlight *might*'s epistemic nuance, used to describe potential outcomes that rely on certain conditions being met.

In travel blog discourse, these constructions typically appear in contexts offering practical advice, preparatory warnings, or suggestive alternatives. They present *might* as a marker of tentative possibility, framing the result as neither certain nor unlikely, but rather contingent on the scenario described in the if-clause.

61. *If you spend a lot of time in cities or fly frequently, you might prefer a rolling duffel or suitcase. (Corpus Might, Example 21)*

62. *If you're an introvert, you might prefer slower-paced activities, while extroverts might enjoy group tours or social activities. (Coepuc Might, Example 33)*

In these examples, *might* functions to hedge advice or suggestions, making them more tentative and adaptable. In both (61) and (62), *might prefer* conveys a possible preference that depends on a condition related to lifestyle or personality. This use of *might* is especially useful in travel blogs because it softens the writer's stance, allowing for inclusive and flexible guidance that acknowledges diverse reader experiences. The hypothetical constructions help balance authority with politeness, offering possible outcomes without sounding overly prescriptive or certain.

### **4.3 Can and Could**

This chapter examines the epistemic uses of the modal verbs *can* and *could*, with particular attention to the criteria and contexts that determine their epistemic interpretation. The first analysis is focused on time reference, followed by an examination of the verbs' epistemic interpretation. As mentioned earlier (see 2.3), the modal verb *can* is said to express epistemic possibility in negative and interrogative statements (Leech 2004; Palmer 1990). In contrast, other linguists argue whether *can* has any genuine epistemic use (Papafragou 2000; Perkins 1983). However, in the articles collected, there were no examples of negative statements or interrogative structures. Moreover, there was only one occurrence of *can* expressing epistemic possibility.

### 4.3.1 Time reference

This chapter examines the time reference of the modal verbs *can* and *could* in the analysed travel blog corpus, focusing specifically on their epistemic uses. The following table summarises their distribution across different time references.

Table 5 – Time reference

	Present		Future		Past		Indeterminate	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Can (1)</b>	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Could (14)</b>	4	30.8%	8	61.5%	0	0%	2	15.4%

The data shows that *can* appears exclusively with present time reference, while *could* occurs most frequently with future time reference, followed by present and indeterminate cases. Notably, neither *can* nor *could* in the dataset is used with past time reference.

The single example of *can* in the dataset illustrates its typical epistemic use to express a present possibility:

63. This **can** be helpful but it's not necessary. (Corpus Can, Example 1)  
 = *This is possibly helpful, but it is not necessary.*

In example (63), *can* signals that something is possible or available at the moment of writing. This aligns with the established tendency of *can* to express present abilities, opportunities, or possibilities in travel advice and recommendations.

64. So you've finally found the cheapest flights available for your destination, but you heard somewhere that if you wait and book at the last minute — the flights **could** be cheaper. (Corpus Could, Example 7)  
 = *It is possible the flights will be cheaper.*

In contrast, *could* demonstrates much broader temporal flexibility and is predominantly used to indicate future possibilities. In this example (64), *could* projects a range of potential future outcomes, frequently within conditional or hypothetical frameworks. This use is particularly suited to travel blogs, where writers often speculate about possible scenarios, offer advice, or describe outcomes that depend on certain conditions being met.

While most occurrences of *could* in the dataset refer to the future, several examples express possibilities tied to the present

65. *If you're wasted, you're not present, and anything **could** be happening around you (or to you). (Corpus Could, Example 9)*

In example (65), the modal verb *could* expresses epistemic possibility with a present time reference. The phrase “anything could be happening around you (or to you)” refers to events that may be occurring at this very moment while the person is mentally absent due to intoxication. The use of the progressive aspect “could be happening” further emphasises ongoing potential actions or events in the present.

### 4.3.2 Epistemic Can

The only occurrence of the modal verb *can* is a clear example of epistemic possibility. It is preceded by an inanimate subject, *this*, and followed by a stative verb *be*. As shown earlier (see 4.3.1), it can be paraphrased as “It is possibly helpful”. Moreover, *can* could be replaced by *might* to show the epistemic meaning of the verb and the speaker’s uncertainty. In addition, the conjunction *but* signals a concessive use of the modal verb paraphrasable as “Although it can be helpful, it is not necessary.” There were no other occurrences of epistemic *can* were found in the analysed articles, meaning that *can* is mostly used to express ability or permission in travel blog discourse.

### 4.3.3 Epistemic Could

In travel blog discourse, the modal verb *could* is often used epistemically to express possibility or probability based on the writer’s judgment or reasoning, rather than conveying ability, permission, or physical capacity. The epistemic meaning is typically indicated by the context, the types of propositions involved, and the fact that *could* often accompanies hypothetical or conditional constructions.

66. *If you're good at planning, budgeting, and bargaining, perhaps this **could** be your thing. (Corpus Could, Example 10)*

67. *But the truth about earthquakes is that it's impossible to predict when the next big one might happen. It **could** be tomorrow, or it could be 1,000 years from now. (Corpus Could, Example 13)*

Both examples (66, 67) clearly show the epistemic use of the modal verb *could*. In (66), *could* suggests a possible fit or preference based on reasoning. The writer is not saying the

activity is inherently suited to everyone, but is hypothesising that it might be a good match depending on the reader's skills. Moreover, the adverb *perhaps*, inanimate subject *it*, and stative verb *be* make the epistemic use even more apparent. It is also based on a condition (if-clause) "if you're good at planning, budgeting..." making this a hypothetical use of the verb.

68. *Yes, the lake is amazing, and I think it lives up to the hype on social media, although that could change someday if it becomes overdeveloped. (Corpus Could, Example 2)*

The sentence (68) is another example of the hypothetical use of *could*. The future change is contingent on a hypothetical condition "if it becomes overdeveloped". The situation being described (the lake no longer living up to the hype) is not real but possible under the assumed condition.

#### 4.4 Indeterminate Cases

The modal verbs *may*, *might*, and *could* do not always carry a single, clearly defined meaning. In certain cases, a modal can express both epistemic and dynamic or deontic modality at the same time. These instances allow for more than one interpretation, and the surrounding context may not be sufficient to eliminate the ambiguity. Such overlaps are especially frequent in travel blog discourse, where expressions of possibility often intertwine with recommendations and advice.

69. *Anyone wishing to wake up to a sea breeze drifting in through the window might consider a property along the coast. (Corpus Might, Example )*  
= *Epistemic: It is possible that someone will consider a coastal property.*  
= *Dynamic: It is possible for someone to consider a coastal property*

In this example (69), *might consider* is epistemically modal in that the writer is speculating about potential decisions. At the same time, the phrasing implies the reader's practical ability to consider and possibly act upon this advice, introducing a dynamic reading.

70. *'A month in India'' could grow into a successful blog faster if the content is solely focused on India. (Corpus Could, Example )*  
= *Epistemic: It is possible that the blog will grow faster under certain conditions.*  
= *Dynamic: It is possible for the blog to grow.*

In this case (70), *could* expresses both epistemic possibility (the writer's prediction) and dynamic capacity (the inherent ability of the blog to develop). Both paraphrases are equally acceptable and demonstrate how modal verbs often carry layered meanings in authentic discourse.

## Conclusion

This chapter presents an overview of the paper's theoretical part and research about modal verbs expressing epistemic possibility, specifically *may*, *might*, *can* and *could*. Firstly, the term modality was defined, and later, the distinction between deontic, epistemic and dynamic was introduced.

Moreover, before the focus shifted to modal verbs, other ways of expressing modality were mentioned, such as nouns, adverbs and adjectives. The contrast between deontic and epistemic modality followed right after, highlighting the main differences and possible overlap between both types of modalities.

Necessity and possibility were the following topics introduced in the thesis, and the idea of how they are connected to modality and modal verbs was presented. After this chapter, epistemic modality was talked about in further detail, as it is the main focus of this thesis. In this chapter, it is explained how epistemic modality expresses possibility and the speaker's uncertainty, and it introduces subjectivity, which is connected to epistemic modality by conveying the speaker's opinions and beliefs.

In Chapter 2, the core modal verbs, regardless of modality, were introduced and discussed along with their most important properties. They were divided into three groups according to how frequently they appear in general, not only in written or spoken language. Other features of the modals mentioned were, for example, their form in past, present and future tense, which always remains the same, and the modal needs to be followed by another verb in the appropriate tense form to express the time reference. Furthermore, negation, reported speech and voice are presented and explained in further detail.

Then, each of the four modal verbs, which is another central topic of this thesis, was presented, and the most important facts and features were mentioned. *May* was introduced in concessive clauses and meanings; *might*'s connection to tentative and hypothetical meaning was explained, along with the mention of *might* being the equivalent of *may* in reported speech. Then, each of the four modal verbs, which is another central topic of this thesis, was presented, and the most important facts and features were mentioned. *May* was introduced in concessive clauses and meanings; *might*'s connection to tentative and hypothetical meaning was explained, along with the mention of *might* being the equivalent of *may* in reported speech. The modal

verb *can* generally expresses general or practical possibility and is often dynamic, though it can occasionally carry epistemic meaning in specific contexts. In contrast, *could* is typically used as the past form of *can* or to indicate hypothetical or conditional situations.

The last chapter of the theoretical part of the thesis describes the travel blog discourse, firstly introducing the electronic discourse in general and later focusing on just travel blogs and explaining their function and purpose, that being a way for travel bloggers to share their experiences and suggestions with other potential travellers.

The research proved that the modal expressing epistemic possibility, which appeared the most in the articles collected, was the verb *may* and the verb *might* followed right after. *Can* and *could*, on the other hand, are very restricted in their epistemic usage, and it depends on the context and specific criteria.

These verbs, *may* and *might*, were put together in the analysis, and properties such as time reference, negation, aspect and concessive and hypothetical use were discussed. The analysis revealed that both modals frequently refer to the future, which is very common for epistemic modal verbs in travel blogs, because writers often speculate about what could possibly happen. The occurrences of negation and aspect were not that frequent. Lastly, *may* was mostly used in concessive clauses, while *might* appeared in hypothetical uses, which is not surprising, given that each use is very common for the verbs.

Chapter 4.3 has demonstrated that in travel blog discourse, the modal verbs *can* and *could* differ significantly in their temporal and epistemic uses. The data reveals that *can* is restricted to expressing present-time epistemic possibility, typically indicating what is currently feasible or likely, as exemplified by the single occurrence found. In contrast, *could* displays a wider temporal range, predominantly signalling future possibilities within hypothetical or conditional contexts, but also occasionally referring to present-time epistemic scenarios. This flexibility allows *could* to effectively convey the tentative and speculative nature of travel advice and reflections.

The last chapter discussed indeterminate cases, meaning that sometimes it was not clear whether the modal expressed only epistemic modality, or if it conveyed another type as well.

There were very few occurrences of a modal conveying epistemic and deontic meaning, or expressing epistemic and dynamic modality. However, in most cases, it was apparent that only epistemic modality was expressed.

## Resumé

Cílem práce je provedení výzkumu zabývající se výskytem modálních sloves *may*, *might*, *can* a *could*, která vyjadřují možnostní (jistotní) modalitu v diskurzu cestovatelských blogů.

Práce je rozdělena do dvou částí: teoretickou a praktickou. Teoretická část začíná pojednáním o modalitě a jejích definicích, a poté rozlišuje mezi deontickou, epistemickou a dynamickou modalitou, stručně nastiňuje jejich klíčové rozdíly a uvádí názorné příklady. Následně se diskuse zabývá kontrastu mezi deontickou a epistemickou modalitou, přičemž se zaměřuje na jejich odlišné a zároveň společné prvky, jako je nutnost a možnost, kterými se zabývá následující kapitola. Poté se práce zaměřuje na modalitu jistotní a dále zkoumá charakteristiku výše zmíněných modálních sloves vyjadřujících jistotní modalitu a představuje diskurs cestovatelských blogů. Praktická část se zaměřuje na analýzu vytvořeného korpusu z několika hledisek.

Výzkum prokázal, že modální sloveso vyjadřující epistemickou možnost, které se ve shromážděných člancích objevovalo nejčastěji, bylo sloveso *may* a poté sloveso *might*. Naproti tomu slovesa *can* a *could* vyjadřující modalitu jistotní se vyskytovala velmi zřídka, přičemž jejich výskyt závisí na kontextu a konkrétních kritériích.

Slovesa *may* a *might* byla zpracována společně a byly analyzovány vlastnosti jako časová reference, negace, aspekt a koncesivní a hypotetické užití. Analýza ukázala, že obě modální slovesa často odkazují na budoucnost, což je pro epistemická modální slovesa v cestovatelských blozích velmi běžné. Autoři totiž často spekulují o tom, co by se mohlo stát. Výskyt negace a aspektu nebyl tak častý. *May* se většinou používalo v přípustkových větách, zatímco *might* se objevovalo v hypotetických užitích, což není překvapivé, vzhledem k tomu, že každé z těchto užití je pro tato slovesa velmi časté.

Kapitola 4.3 ukázala, že v diskurzu cestovního blogu se modální slovesa *can* a *could* významně liší ve svém časovém a epistemickém užití. Analýza ukazuje, že *can* vyjadřující epistemickou možnost je omezeno na odkaz na přítomný čas a typicky označuje to, co je aktuálně možné nebo pravděpodobné, jak dokládá jediný zjištěný výskyt. Naproti tomu sloveso *could* vykazuje širší časový rozsah, převážně odkazuje na budoucí možnosti v rámci hypotetických nebo podmíněných kontextů, ale příležitostně se vztahuje i k současnosti.

Poslední kapitola se zabývá neurčitými případy, což znamená, že někdy nebylo jasné, zda modalita vyjadřuje pouze epistemickou modalitu, nebo zda vyjadřuje i jiný typ. Bylo však

jen velmi málo případů, kdy modální sloveso současně vyjadřovalo epistemickou a deontickou, nebo epistemickou a dynamickou modalitu. Ve většině případů však bylo zřejmé, že vyjadřuje pouze epistemickou modalitu.

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## Corpus

Term	Code
Past time	PA
Present time	PR
Future time	FU
Negation	N
Progressive aspect	ING
Perfective aspect	PV
Hypothetical use	H
Concessive use	CS

## May

1. Your guide might demand much more, and **may** get rude or pushy and aggressive, but that's how it is with everything in Egypt. **(FU, CS)**
2. Avoid sharing your hotel name, and, if possible, avoid telling people it's your first time visiting the city/country, as they **may** use that as an invitation to try and rip you off. **(FU)**
3. It **may** seem like the world is a dangerous place, with trouble lurking around every corner, but that's only because fear sells. **(PR, CS)**
4. Some of the rental fees **may** be negotiable. **(FU/PR)**
5. If you still have time and energy, you **may** want to do something extra before you leave. **(FU, H)**
6. Keep in mind the tour providers in Bhutan normally don't include any activities like this on the last day of the trip, so there **may** be an extra charge to add it to your itinerary. **(FU)**
7. The biggest question you **may** have on your mind is "Who will read my travel blog?". **(PR)**
8. You **may** have to wait a few days but you'll get a spot much cheaper than if you pre-book your tour. **(FU, CS)**
9. No matter what your accommodation tastes **may** be, one thing everyone has in common is that no one wants to pay a fortune for it. **(PR)**
10. At nine storeys high, it **may** not sound as impressive as some of the other free London viewpoints on the list, but the lack of tall buildings nearby gives you uninterrupted views of the surrounding area. **(PR, CS)**

11. Whether it's free activities nearby, family-friendly spots, or even local festivals and events that **may** be going on at the time, the tourism office is there to point you in the right direction. **(FU, ING)**
12. If you check these sites regularly, or sign up for their newsletters, you can get lucky and score some huge flight deals that other people **may** never see! **(FU, N)**
13. You **may** be surprised at just how cheap these flights can be... **(FU, PV)**
14. Cheap tickets on budget airlines are often non-refundable and can't be changed — plus they **may** fly to smaller airports outside the main city, requiring additional travel time on the ground. **(FU)**
15. Flying to a random location can be a lot of fun too, and you **may** end up discovering an area of the world you hadn't planned on visiting. **(FU)**
16. You **may** even save money on the same exact itinerary, just booking each section independently. **(FU)**
17. You **may** be asked for proof of a return ticket before boarding. **(FU, PV)**
18. You **may** be eligible for compensation — up to hundreds of dollars through Compensair. **(FU)**
19. You **may** also be too stressed and panicky to think straight. **(FU)**
20. But researching travel warnings will give you a general idea of what's going on in the country you're visiting, and specific problem areas you **may** want to avoid. **(FU)**
21. Many Islamic countries have specific dress code guidelines that are often strictly enforced — and other destinations have laws that **may** catch you out. **(FU)**
22. In many places, making direct eye contact with potential threats can help ward off an attack, ensuring they notice you see them and what they **may** be planning. **(FU, ING)**
23. You **may** have been told to cover your hand when keying in your PIN number at an ATM. **(PA, PV)**
24. Often you'll find other solo travellers there, who **may** want to do some of the same activities you want to. **(FU/PR)**
25. You don't need to go crazy and bring your own needles and scalpels, but stocking the basics to treat cuts, sprains, stomach issues, and burns can help if you or people around you **may** need them. **(FU)**

26. Harder drugs are especially risky — it's a good way to get in trouble with the police, who **may** not be as forgiving (or even law-abiding) as authorities back home. (FU, N)
27. You **may** only see these places & meet these people once in your lifetime. (FU)
28. You don't have to agree with everyone, but you **may** be surprised what you'll learn from the people you meet during your travels. (FU, PV, CS)
29. The travel gear I use **may** not work for everyone. (PR, N)
30. Adventure travelers spend a lot of time in the mountains, deserts, and jungles. Maybe they like to hitchhike, and prefer visiting more remote destinations where they **may** not have a roof to sleep under. (FU, N)
31. If you're lucky, you **may** experience an apparition or ghost sighting, but this is not always the case. (FU, CS)
32. Depending on your location, you **may** even be able to find bioluminescent kayak tours, which is an almost magical experience. (FU)
33. Short stays often call for smaller, more economical cars, while longer trips **may** justify investing in a vehicle with extra features for comfort. (FU/PR)
34. It **may** sound overly simplistic to say that getting enough sleep is vital to avoiding travel fatigue. (PR)
35. It **may** not be the most popular piece of advice for travelers looking to cut loose, but it will be very difficult to beat travel fatigue while also battling a hangover. (PR, N, CS)
36. Certain medical treatments **may** require extra precautions before flying or traveling long distances. (FU)
37. Or, women who have undergone pelvic surgeries, like the transvaginal implant, **may** need to take extra care. (FU/PR)
38. Mountaineering or mountain climbing isn't for the faint of heart, but there are many people who are passionate about mountains. If you're one of them, you **may** want to focus on creating a blog for mountain climbing. (FU/PR)
39. If you've been to Berghain in Berlin and Pacha in Ibiza, you **may** know your way around finding the best place to party. (PR)
40. You **may** see some countries that are beautiful, but also have a lot of poverty. (FU)
41. The big drawback of buying a drink package when you cruise is that **you may** not get the value out of it that you think. (FU, N)

42. If you're someone who is picky about wines, you **may** find that the wines included in drink packages don't quite meet your expectations. **(FU)**
43. It also depends on the spot you hitchhike from and any police officers you **may** or may not encounter. **(FU)**
44. It also depends on the spot you hitchhike from and any police officers you may or **may** not encounter. **(FU, N)**
45. If you're hitchhiking in a foreign country, you **may** encounter a language barrier. **(FU)**
46. While piles of uncollected garbage or pristine parks **may** be a little more obvious, air quality is always a reliable indicator of a city's environmental health. **(PR, CS)**
47. You **may** not want to eat before going on this culinary adventure through the city. **(FU, N)**
48. The tour can accommodate vegetarian dietary requirements but **may** not suit those on a vegan diet. **(FU/PR, N, CS)**
49. Since it's so secluded, you **may** find a few celebrities hanging out here. **(FU/PR)**
50. Just be aware the bridge can get crowded and **may** close during winter or inclement weather. **(FU)**
51. In winter, the misty lake with snow-capped mountains in the background creates a magical atmosphere, though boat services **may** be reduced. **(FU/PR, CS)**
52. Round-trip tickets to the summit are expensive (around €60), but various combination tickets and regional passes **may** offer better value. **(FU/PR, CS)**
53. Photographers and food enthusiasts **may** be inclined to spend even longer in Florence. **(FU/PR)**
54. If you're planning a long trip with a ton of beautiful destinations in mind, you **may** want to consider a rental that allows unlimited mileage. **(FU/PR)**
55. The insight provided by customer reviews usually paints an accurate picture of the RV experience that you **may** have with the same vehicle. **(FU)**
56. RVshare can also mediate any disputes you **may** have. **(FU/PR)**
57. While you **may** not have all the luxurious amenities of a motorhome, a travel trailer will still be comfortable, and many are outfitted with modern amenities. **(PR, N, CS)**
58. These are things that the RV owner **may** provide, but if not, you will want to bring them with you. **(FU/PR, CS)**

59. Some do provide towels, but you **may** want to bring extra, especially if you plan on doing many outdoor activities like swimming and kayaking. **(FU, CS)**
60. While some owners will be happy to provide these items for free, some **may** charge an additional fee. **(FU/PR, CS)**
61. Renting these items **may** be more convenient if you're picking up the RV far from home. **(FU/PR)**
62. Use a search engine like TravelInsurance.com to get multiple quotes on coverage for things like flight issues if you're flying and medical emergencies that your usual insurance **may** not cover. **(FU/PR, N)**
63. It's important to note that different airlines **may** have additional restrictions, so it's always a good idea to check with your specific airline before packing. **(FU/PR)**
64. While a bit pricey, this cooler will last you a lifetime, with plenty of room for food, snacks, ice-cold drinks, or whatever else you **may** need to pack alongside your ice packs. **(FU)**
65. Remember that although reading a questionable romance novel in the sand **may** sound like heaven to you, it's highly unlikely your kids will be so easily amused. **(PR, CS)**
66. While sleeping out under the stars **may** sound romantic, things can feel slightly different when the wind kicks up and pelts you in the face with sand. **(PR)**
67. Depending on your camping trip destination, you **may** or may not find yourself fending off unsavory insects. **(FU)**
68. Depending on your camping trip destination, you may or **may** not find yourself fending off unsavory insects. **(FU, N)**
69. While many smaller coolers are designed for a day at the beach, you **may** want to invest in a larger option if you plan to spend days off the grid. **(PR, CS)**
70. Checking them does still give me anxiety, though, and I've found that a ski boot bag is typically easy to fit in the overhead bin, and you **may** even be able to have your normal carry-on luggage double as a boot bag. **(FU)**
71. If you try to jam anything else in your equipment bag, you **may** be charged for an extra checked bag – even if it's still underweight – and the site warns that they may have you open it at the check-in desk so they can check. **(FU)**
72. If you try to jam anything else in your equipment bag, you may be charged for an extra checked bag – even if it's still underweight – and the site warns that they **may** have you open it at the check-in desk so they can check. **(FU)**

73. But be warned: After following our flight booking tips, you'll get so good at it that your friends **may** expect the same services for their travels. **(FU)**
74. Fares **may** drastically increase in price as you approach the departure date. **(FU)**

## **Might**

1. Kittery **might** be best known for its outlet shopping, but it also has a fascinating history dating back to 1647, making it Maine's oldest town. **(PR, PV, CS)**
2. If you think you **might** not have Wi-Fi or cell phone service during your trip, write the number down in your phone on a notes app just to be safe. **(FU, N, H)**
3. Changing your mindset **might** not be a traditional budget tip, but it's important nonetheless. **(PR, N, CS)**
4. Your guide **might** demand much more, and may get rude or pushy and aggressive, but that's how it is with everything in Egypt. **(FU, CS)**
5. Not as many tourists know about it, so you **might** have the place all to yourself. **(FU)**
6. Diving charters **might** seem nuts in Maine — the water up here is not exactly Caribbean warm — but scuba diving here is unique. **(PR, CS)**
7. Don't pigeonhole yourself into a niche brand if you anticipate your content **might** grow with you as a traveller. **(FU)**
8. So, especially on a hot summer day, there **might** be more pleasant spots to pass time in Bari. **(FU)**
9. There is also the risk of flooding, which means you **might** have to stay longer on the track. **(FU)**
10. Sign up for cheap ticket alerts, keep an eye on mistake fares, and take a look at alternative airports that **might** be near your final destination. **(FU/PR)**
11. Otherwise you **might** miss your flight! **(FU)**
12. When you sign up for the right travel rewards credit cards, and use them wisely, it's easier than you **might** think to save up enough miles for a free flight — you only pay for taxes. **(PR)**
13. Sure, very rarely the prices **might** drop if you wait. **(FU)**
14. If disaster strikes, you **might** not have time to search for numbers for local police or ambulance services, or directions to the nearest embassy for your country. **(FU, N, H)**
15. Some can be excellent sources for good information, others are miserable assholes who **might** actually lead you into trouble. **(FU)**
16. Because sharing that you're new **might** also signal you're a good target for scams. **(FU)**
17. Yet in other parts of the world, too much eye contact **might** invite trouble... **(FU)**

18. The rest of the time, you'll get a notification from the bank's fraud detection team that irregular activity has been recorded on your card, and they've put a hold on all transactions until the situation is resolved – which **might** take days. **(FU)**
19. Your body **might** sense signs of danger before your brain is fully aware. **(PR)**
20. Women worried about being assaulted or harassed **might** prefer to visit a local street bazaar or nightclub in a group rather than alone. **(FU)**
21. If you spend a lot of time in cities or fly frequently, you **might** prefer a rolling duffel or suitcase. **(FU, H)**
22. Carry-on backpackers prefer to travel carry-on only and hate checking bags at airports. They primarily visit cities on the “backpacker trail” with decent travel infrastructure like hostels, hotels, transportation etc. They **might** embark on the occasional day hike, but don't need their own camping gear. **(FU, CS)**
23. If you're expecting a vibrant town like Alghero or La Maddalena, I think you **might** be a bit disappointed with San Teodoro. **(FU/PR, H)**
24. You **might** think that you know Italian cuisine — get ready to have your world broken open! **(PR)**
25. You **might** find that you prefer to have a little coffee with milk like this instead of your usual cappuccino or latte. **(FU)**
26. And those are all fabulous places — but I think you **might** get more out of your trip if you add some not-so-popular spots. **(FU, H)**
27. In fact, your agriturismo stay **might** end up being the highlight of your trip to Italy! **(FU)**
28. But I know it **might** sound a bit complicated. **(PR, CS)**
29. Anyone wishing to wake up to a sea breeze drifting in through the window **might** consider a property along the coast: the real estate Tuscany Italy market offers homes facing the sea and properties equipped with every comfort. **(FU, PR)**
30. Although you **might** not be sipping on liquid courage, don't worry – there's no need to be afraid when going on a ghost tour. **(FU, N, ING, CS)**
31. Having everyone dance to different music **might** seem chaotic at first, but it just adds to all the fun. **(PR)**
32. These travel items **might** not be on your packing list right now, but they are about to be. **(PR, N, CS)**
33. If you're an introvert, you **might** prefer slower-paced activities, while extroverts might enjoy group tours or social activities. **(FU, H)**

34. Planning your trip during a country's off-season can save you money, but it **might** also mean dealing with unpredictable weather. **(FU, CS)**
35. You **might** think that this is only a good way to start if you have absolutely no idea what to write about — but even if you do have some ideas floating around in your head, putting them on paper will help get them out there so other people can see them too! **(PR)**
36. Research gives you ideas that you **might** not have thought of otherwise and helps you get to know your destination better, which will make it easier for you to write about. **(PA, N, PV)**
37. Or if you're writing about how to get around town while visiting London, you **might** include a video of a London cab ride—if that's what comes across best in terms of conveying your point (or if it's just funny). **(FU/PR, H)**
38. That's probably because they offer good information that resonates with readers - and it **might** hint as to what kinds of things they'd like to read more often too. **(PR)**
39. You **might** find that you don't need as many household items. **(FU)**
40. You **might** realize you don't need to own two cars. **(FU)**
41. It **might** translate into what I like to call a "career minimalist." **(FU)**
42. Things **might** not always go your way. **(FU, N)**
43. Having a drink package also lets you try new drinks that you **might** not normally order without worrying that you're making a bad choice. **(PR, N)**
44. Even if you think you'll use a drink package every day, remember that you **might** be spending a significant amount of time off your ship during port days on your cruise. **(FU, ING)**
45. Even the priciest drink packages **might** not include your favorite brand of whiskey or vodka, for instance, and many drink packages only apply to drinks on menus that cost under, say, \$15. **(FU/PR)**
46. Certain countries **might** be more challenging than others. **(PR)**
47. Your phone **might** die, and/or you might find yourself in an area without coverage. **(FU)**
48. Your phone might die, and/or you **might** find yourself in an area without coverage. **(FU)**
49. In most countries, sticking out your thumb is the recognized symbol for hitchhiking. In some places, however, it **might** be considered offensive. **(PR, CS)**

50. Sometimes, a driver **might** not want to talk at all, and on longer hitches I often fell asleep. **(PR, N)**
51. Not only **might** you be standing in the open for long periods with no cover, but you might get a ride in the back of a pickup and be exposed for hours. **(FU, ING)**
52. Not only might you be standing in the open for long periods with no cover, but you **might** get a ride in the back of a pickup and be exposed for hours. **(FU)**
53. Once you arrive on the island, you **might** be overwhelmed by the many boat trip options available. **(FU)**
54. While you **might** be ready to get in the driver's seat and head straight to the nearest national park, don't book the first great-looking home on wheels you see. **(FU/PR, CS)**
55. If you're planning for a long-term RV rental, a Class C motorhome **might** be more comfortable. **(FU/PR, H)**
56. But regardless of how you **might** feel about it, adhering to the 3-1-1 Rule helps navigate TSA security checkpoints smoothly and without unnecessary delays. **(PR, CS)**
57. Use these tips to work on your foreign language skills. You **might** surprise yourself at how you can talk to others...intentionally! **(FU)**
58. You **might** not have realized how powerful your mobile phone's language-learning tool can be. **(PA, N, PV)**
59. Some people also fear how native speakers react when they struggle with their language. As opposed to what you **might** think, most will be excited and help you learn even faster! **(PR)**
60. You **might** have a list of foreign languages you want to learn, but which is on-demand? The priority may vary depending on your needs. **(PR, CS)**
61. If you've decided to bring your ski or snowboard gear with you on your next ski vacation, you **might** be feeling overwhelmed. **(PR, H)**

## **Can**

1. This **can** be helpful but it's not necessary. **(PR)**

## Could

1. A private speedboat tour like this will set you back 4 million Rupiah (~\$250 USD) for the roundtrip, but it's quicker than the ferry, and it **could** be economical if you're travelling with friends to share the boat cost. **(FU, H)**
2. Yes, the lake is amazing, and I think it lives up to the hype on social media, although that **could** change someday if it becomes overdeveloped. **(FU, H/CS)**
3. Here's what a good 5-day itinerary for Bhutan **could** look like. **(FU)**
4. You can reach the viewpoint in 15 minutes, but it's a steep climb with exposure, and a fall **could** be dangerous, so it's not for everyone. **(FU/PR)**
5. I love to challenge my advice, so also consider that picking a very niche brand **could** also be strategic for SEO purposes. **(PR)**
6. "A Month in India" **could** grow into a successful blog faster if the content is solely focused on India. **(FU, H)**
7. So you've finally found the cheapest flights available for your destination, but you heard somewhere that if you wait and book at the last minute — the flights **could** be cheaper. **(FR, H)**
8. It's the State Department's job to warn you about everything that **could** go wrong, which is sometimes different to what is likely to go wrong. Present, hypothetical **(FU, H)**
9. If you're wasted, you're not present, and anything **could** be happening around you (or to you). **(PR, H)**
10. If you're good at planning, budgeting, and bargaining, perhaps this **could** be your thing. **(FU/PR, H)**
11. If you still have extra time left over, you could also hire a local taxi to take you to one of the cenotes near Valladolid while you're at it! **(FU/PR, H)**
12. While going through security, scanners and x-ray machines look for dangerous objects that could harm the aircraft's passengers or crew onboard. **(FU)**
13. But the truth about earthquakes is that it's impossible to predict when the next big one might happen. It could be tomorrow, or it could be 1,000 years from now. **(FU)**
14. But the truth about earthquakes is that it's impossible to predict when the next big one might happen. It could be tomorrow, or it could be 1,000 years from now. **(FU)**

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