

Using Modality TASKS

Grammar - Conditionals

In academic writing, it is less common to use 'is' / 'was' / 'will' / 'must' (which express 100% certainty) and more common to use less certain / weaker words. How strongly you want to express something will depend on how much *evidence* you have to support the statement.

You will be familiar with MODAL VERBS: will / could / can / might / may & must / should

We can also use MODAL ADJECTIVES: certain / definite / clear / likely / probable / possible

MODAL ADVERBS: certainly / definitely / clearly / probably / possibly / conceivably / remotely / virtually

And MODAL NOUNS: certainty / probability / possibility

Task 1

Read the introduction in the blue rectangle above and use modality to 'soften' the claims. You may also add other 'impersonal' phrases to the sentences to make them more academic e.g. According to X... / It has often been reported that / It seems...

Task 2

Look at the following paragraphs about 'private labels' – one type of 'private labels' are supermarket own brands e.g. "*Tesco Taste the Difference*". Look at the paragraphs and use modality and other types of hedging to improve them:

1 There are now more private labels in the market than ever before. Retailers provide all kinds of products to customers, from a large variety of food categories to cleaning products and even pet foods. This is the reason why the private label market has grown rapidly over the past 30 years. This rapid growth is affecting market leading companies,



which report significant losses (The Economist, 2009). These results show that market leading companies will not be able to restore their profits to their previous levels again. Private labels are offering better alternatives to their customers in terms of price and quality. There is evidence that customers who have switched to private labels will never go back; in other words, consumers will not revert to the more expensive version any more.

2 However, consumers still value brands. Consumers consider brands as an assurance of quality, comfort and trust (Smith, 2008). Therefore, managers must focus on the strengths of the brand name because this will make consumers buy them. Sales will also be increased through product innovation. Customers demand significant innovations which then make them feel they are paying more for a significantly better product. Customers are not willing, however, to pay for minor alterations, such as new flavours and scents. There is evidence that market leading brands must place greater emphasis on emerging countries, such as Asia or Latin America (Field, 2009). This is because emerging countries do not have enough knowledge and / or resources to offer private labels, which means that market leading brands are free to promote their products.