The subject studied is the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) by companies in the frame of cooperation relationships.

The object is to explain the means of communication used by partners in inter-company cooperation, regarding many factors concerning each of the partners (size, sector, localisation, turnover…), as well as the cooperation relationship (history and evolution of the relationship, aims of the cooperation). To study the uses of ICT, we should first be interested in the equipments of firms. Thus, I tried to test the hypothesis concerning the determinants of use of ICT in a two scales methodology, trying first to explain the levels of ICT equipments present in the companies and then to include other factors concerning the place occupied by ICT in the communication with partners.

Usually in economic literature, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are supposed to be an important factor in the evolution of these relationships as they facilitate communication and therefore reduce distances. I studied the impact of distance separating partners on the choice of means of communication, using the data of an inquiry led by Marsouin and including 2000 Breton Small and Medium-Sized Firms. The econometric Model, a Probit model on qualitative variables, reveals a positive impact of distance on the probability of use of ICT, with the greatest significance rate for national and international scales, compared to local and regional ones. The more the partners are spaced out, the more ICT are important to communicate together. A Part from distance, many other factors influence the level of ICT equipments of the firms and the way they use these means. The most significant elements are turn-over, oldness of computerization and organisational proximity.

Concerning the ICT equipments, I distinguished three categories of means of communication: audiovisual communication tools (videoconference, telephone by internet), internal communication and management tools (Workflows, shared agenda, cooperative software…) and means for external communication (website, Intranet, EDI). The results show that many characteristics of the firms influence their choices of ICT equipments: size and turnover are the most significant factors; the major localisation of partners influences of adoption of external communication tools and the firms belonging to a group or a network of companies are more likely to adopt internal means of information and communication.