

The development of French marketing terms: Processes of term formation and semantic change (1960–2008)

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Abstract This contribution presents selected results of a larger study whose main interest is to find out how French marketing terminology has developed from the beginning of the discipline in France in the 1960s until 2008. The diachronic study is based on a text corpus, which consists of ten samples, each representing a period of four or five years, of the specialist journal *Revue Française du Marketing* (RFM). An exemplary analysis reveals how the progress in marketing manifests itself linguistically in the creation and borrowing of terms. With the aid of corpus linguistic measures and instruments (WordSmith Tools 5.0), we investigate how basic terms like the term *marketing* itself or the concept of communication are adopted and come into fashion. A further look at the use of these and other terms leads to some interesting results concerning processes of term formation and semantic change.

Keywords terminology, corpus linguistics, term formation, lexical semantics, semantic change, marketing, French

1 Introduction and research questions

Diachronic studies are rather rare in terminological research. However, for the understanding of the state of the art of a terminology it is very useful to see how it has developed. This general issue can be followed by taking different perspectives. On the one hand it can be treated by observing the most frequently used terms at different stages of the discipline, and on the other hand by investigating the context of terms and analyzing their use over time. This article is based on a larger study whose main interest was to find out such quantitative and qualitative dynamics of the French marketing terminology since the beginning of marketing in France in the 1960s.¹ The database of that study has been updated until 2008 for the purpose of this article. The following descriptions can be regarded as a selective summary of the results of the study.

In detail, we focus on three research questions. First of all, we will take a quantitative perspective and investigate how the basic marketing terminology has grown. We will find out when the terms are used for the first time and how their appearance can be explained by the scientific context. Then, we will pick out two of the most important marketing terms, namely *marketing* itself and *communication*, and explore in more detail how their use has developed over time. In order to do this, we consider their frequency at different times as well as synonyms and aspects of semantic change. Finally, we will take a morphological point of view and show what the most important tendencies of term formation are in the French marketing language.

2 Corpus and Methodology

The French marketing journal *Revue Française du Marketing* (RFM) published by the ADETEM² constitutes the sampling frame of the study. It has been chosen for two reasons: First, the RFM is the most important and comprehensive marketing journal in France, and second, it was

founded in 1956. Thus, it seems to represent the concerns and activities of the French marketing community since the beginning of the discipline quite well. The database consists of two corpora. The first corpus is composed of eight sub-corpora, each representing a period of five years of the RFM (Hänchen 2002a: 64–66). In order to have an equally distributed sample, these sub-corpora consist of each 15th page of the journal. More than 1,100 pages were scanned and transformed into a machine-readable format (about 600,000 tokens). Since the beginning of this century, the RFM has also been available in a digital format and was therefore easier to handle. Hence, corpus 2 includes all articles published between 2001 and 2008 (about 1,300,000 tokens) and it has the advantage to be not only representative but also complete. It consists of two sub-corpora, representing a period of four years (2001–2004, 2005–2008).³ For the quantitative and qualitative analyses, we use the software program *WordSmith* in its latest version (*WordSmith 5.0* (2008)). By means of the *Wordlist* and *Concordance* tools we can find out the basic marketing terms for each sub-corpus and observe how often and in which way they are used (Hänchen 2002a: 69–74).

3 How does a terminology grow?

To answer the first research question already mentioned above, we initially determine the basic marketing terms for each sub-corpus. As marketing term we consider one-word terms and two- or three-word combinations that denote more or less specific concepts of the discipline and are, in our opinion, habitually used by marketers (e.g. *achat*, *agence de publicité*, *campagne publicitaire*, *chiffre d'affaires*, *commercialisation*, *comportement d'achat*, *étude de marché*, *image de marque*, *leader*, *marketing*, *marque de distributeur*, *sponsoring*, *positionnement*, *parrainage*, etc.) (see Hänchen 2002a: 19–25). As basic we regard marketing terms with a certain frequency in at least one of the sub-corpora. The frequency index (FI) corresponds to the relative frequency⁴ multiplied by 100. It gives us quantitative information about the use of a term. A high frequency index means that a term often recurs in the texts (e.g. *marketing*: 24 FI in the sub-corpus 2005–2008, *client*: 17 FI in the sub-corpus 1985–1989, *marketing relationnel*: 0.6 FI in the sub-corpus 2001–2004). The minimal frequency of a basic term has been fixed at 0.2 for one-word terms and 0.02 for two and three-word terms. The determination of the basic terms results in a list of nearly 500 basic marketing terms. If we take a look at the number of basic terms that occur in the different sub-corpora, we come to the result shown in Figure 1. We see that since the beginning in the 1960s until the end of the 1980s there was a regular increase in terms. From the late 1980s on the number of terms tended to stagnate. We can interpret this development as the quantitative expression of the process of the discipline growing and establishing itself. At the beginning the discipline managed with only a small number of terms. Over time, more and more terms were created or adopted in order to denote new marketing-specific concepts.

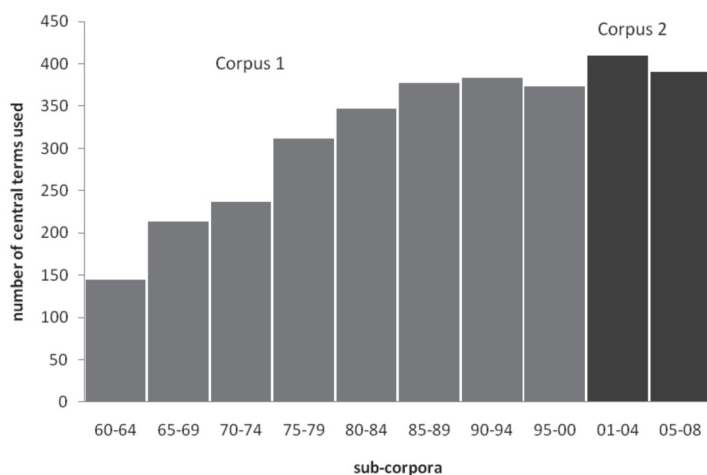


Figure 1: Occurrences of basic marketing terms

To investigate this evolution in detail, we must take a closer look at the emerging terms at different stages. At the beginning, in the 1960s, we find terms denoting basic scientific, economic, and psychological concepts like *attitude*, *chiffre d'affaires*, *efficacité*, *ménage*, *motivation*, or *rendement*. We also find very basic marketing terms (e.g. *client*, *leader*, *marketing*, *marque*, *publicité*, or *segmentation*). In the 1970s, terms like *centre commercial*, *discounteur*, *grande surface*, and *hypermarché* came along with the creation of new forms of distribution (Léon 1973: 3, Meffert 1998: 5, Villemus 1998: 23). In addition, French companies adopted the marketing concept with a certain delay to the United States and were creating new departments and jobs (Usunier 1992: 28, Kotler/Dubois 1997: 686). This evolution is reflected in the corpus by the emergence of terms like *chef de produit*, *département marketing*, *responsable marketing*, or *service marketing*. Finally, through the influence of Philip Kotler, one of the most important American marketing experts, the marketing concept was also extended to the non-commercial sector, so that new forms of marketing like *marketing social*, *marketing bancaire*, or *marketing électoral* appeared (Kotler 1967, 1972a, 1972b, 1975, etc.). In the following decade of the 1980s marketing was characterized by more competition on the markets and therefore more aggressive marketing practices (Pepels 1996: 575, Meffert 1998: 258). The use of the war metaphor in the following quotation gives us an impression of the aggressive mood at that time. As we can see here the development of strategies in order to gain new customers became more and more important:

- (1) Constatons tout d'abord que la guerre commerciale est permanente entre des concurrents qui visent les mêmes territoires et ne veulent pas convenir d'un partage des marchés. Chaque entreprise a besoin d'un espace vital; elle doit s'y faire admettre et désirer dans les relations de services qu'elle entretient; on peut se développer sur un territoire défini ou se déplacer sur des segments nouveaux. Les conflits d'influence et de compétition sont inévitables. [...] le marketing est un système de Recherche, de Stratégie et d'Action pour permettre à une entreprise de prendre la position la plus avantageuse possible sur certains marchés, qu'elle a choisis pour cibles, et face aux stratégies de conquête et aux manœuvres d'opposition des divers concurrents. (Serraf 1981: 147)

Marketers addressed the potential customer more directly and practiced more public relations. Terms reflecting this new directness as well as the strategic way of thinking start to occur at this time in the corpus (*avantage concurrentiel, communication directe, marketing direct, marketing stratégique, marché concurrentiel, stratégie (de) marketing, stratégie de communication, stratégie de marché, stratégie d'entreprise, pénétration des marchés, position concurrentielle*). Another characteristic of the 1980s was the beginning of globalisation. Marketing had to react and created new concepts like 'marketing culturel', 'marketing global', or 'marque globale' (Pepels 1996: 575, Meffert 1998: 1142). In the 1990s marketing tried to get even closer to the customer and to stay in contact with him. This implies that the company focuses its activities and products more on consumer demand. As a consequence, we find terms like *fidélisation, marketing relationnel, and orientation client*. They emerge in the context of the companies' intention to bind customers to them and their products for a longer term. Also ecological aspects became more interesting, as marketing and ecological ideas found their way into the discipline (e.g. *éco-marketing* or *éco-strategy*). With the beginning of the 21st century, the Internet became a more and more important marketing instrument, so that a lot of new terms were created in order to denote the virtual market and its actors. A considerable number of terms (e.g. *achat sur ligne, commerce électronique, cyber-consommateur, e-commerce, e-marque*, etc.) emerged and several competed with each other. Finally, we can note that marketing research paid more attention to ethical aspects. Terms like *commerce équitable* and *développement durable* appeared.

4 How does the use of a term develop over time?

In addition to the above investigation of the general dynamics of a terminology in relation to the evolution of the field as such, it is also interesting to explore the use of single marketing terms. By means of *Wordlist* we can observe the relative frequency in the different sub-corpora, and so we get some indications for the "life-cycle" of a term. For example, we can find out when it occurs for the first time or comes into or out of fashion. In order to verify this purely quantitative information, we have to look at the contexts more closely. By means of the *Concordance Tool*, processes of term formation⁵ or possible semantic changes can be ascertained. In the following section we will concentrate on two key terms of marketing, i.e. *marketing* itself and *communication*.

4.1 The term marketing

Figure 2 shows the frequency indices of the term *marketing* in the different sub-corpora.

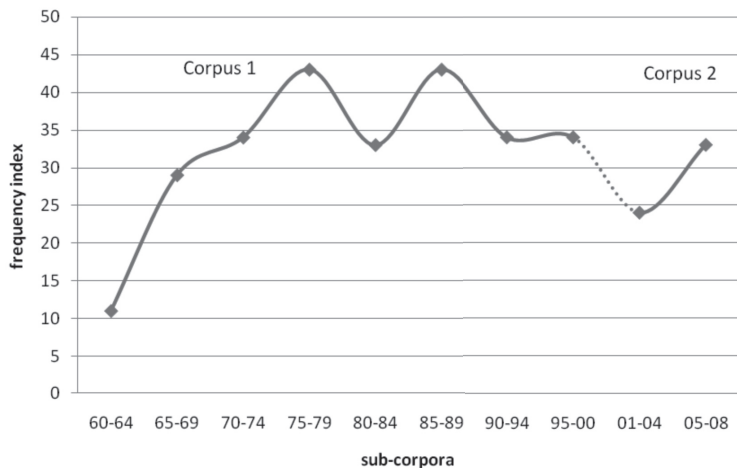


Figure 2: Use of marketing

We see that the use of the term increases considerably in the 1960s and 1970s, and fluctuates slightly at a relatively high level from the 1980s. This quantitative development suggests that the English term *marketing* has established itself in the French marketing language. One way to verify this suggestion is to compare the evolution with the use of terms which have been considered as possible equivalents. These are *vente*, *étude de marché*, *commercialisation*, and *mercatique* (Figure 3).

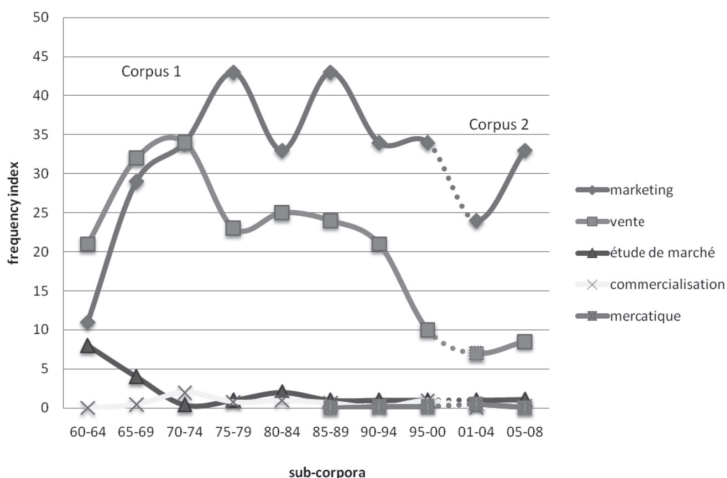


Figure 3: Use of marketing in comparison to possible translations

In the 1960s, salesmen and linguists were thinking about the meaning of *marketing* and wondered whether the term *vente* could not be established as a possible French translation. However, in the corpus we see very clearly that *vente* had been quantitatively overtaken by *marketing* in the 1970s, and that the use of the word has shown a continuous decline until now (see Figure 3). In addition, both the concordance analysis of *vente* and expert comments provide evidence that it does not include all the aspects of meaning covered by *marketing* (see (2)).

- (2) La définition du dictionnaire est une chose, les sens véritables d'un mot à travers son utilisation dans la langue en est une autre et lorsque nos amis américains disent marketing, si nous leur répondions vente ou distribution, nous ne parlerions pas du même concept, car le mot vente n'est en France chargé d'aucune des images que reflète le mot marketing. (Fournis 1969: 4)

Also *étude de marché* has been discussed as a possible synonym. But again, we note that the relatively high frequency index in the 1960s fell continuously until the 1970s and has stayed there until today (see Figure 3). The editor of the RFM himself gives us a further hint for the greater acceptance of *marketing* in comparison to *étude de marché*. The abbreviation ADETEM originally meant “*Association pour le développement des techniques d'exécution et de l'exploitation des études de marché*”. In 1970 the name was changed into “*Association Nationale pour le développement des techniques de marketing*” and since 1997 the organization is simply named “*Association Nationale du Marketing*” (Hänchen 2002a: 105–106). We thus see that the relatively long description paraphrasing the activities of modern marketing was replaced and is now fully captured by *marketing*.

As already mentioned above, marketing experts and terminologists also deliberated about the meaning of the word *commercialisation*, and in the 1960s the Académie Française proposed to use the term *commercialisation* instead of *marketing* (see (3)).

- (3) Une décision récente de l'Académie française a nié le droit de citer dans la langue française à l'expression marketing et on lui a préféré celle de commercialisation. Mon intention n'est pas (je n'en aurais pas le droit!) de discuter cette prise de position, dictée certainement par des raisons, très valables et honorables, de pureté linguistique et de traditions culturelles. Je crains cependant que cette mise au point n'ait de fâcheuses implications sur le plan de formulation des concepts et celui des principes qui doivent inspirer et instruire la philosophie et la pratique de la direction de l'entreprise moderne et dynamique en France. (Teresi 1967: 5)

A look at the corpus proves that *commercialisation* did not replace *marketing* either. A context analysis of the corpora shows that *commercialisation* is used in the same way as its English equivalent *commercialization* and continues designating its own concept (Kotler/Dubois 1998: 537). The following quotations confirm that *commercialisation* only represents the last part of the whole process usually meant by *marketing*. It is used to designate the process of introducing a new product into the market.

- (4) La phase exécution peut comporter des activités complémentaires dans le domaine de la mise au point du produit ou de nouvelles études de marché avant une commercialisation définitive. (Urban 1970: 73)

- (5) Cette approche nous semble similaire à celle qui distingue le marketing amont tourné vers la production et le marketing aval tourné vers la commercialisation. (Michon 1988: 7)

In 1971, the term *mercatique* was created (< lat. *mercat(us)+ique*) and proposed by the first official terminology commission introduced by the *Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances* in 1970. Nevertheless, *mercatique* was very rarely used afterwards. In 1987, the *Commission de terminologie économique et financière* officially prescribed the usage of *mercatique* instead of *marketing*. Yet again, obviously unimpressed by this measure, authors in the RFM continued using *marketing*, so that we can only find very few instances of *mercatique* in the marketing journal. We thus can conclude that, despite the official efforts, the neologism *mercatique* has only partly been accepted by French marketers.

4.2 The term communication

In Figure 4 we see that the term *communication* experienced an enormous increase in use between 1970 and 1990.

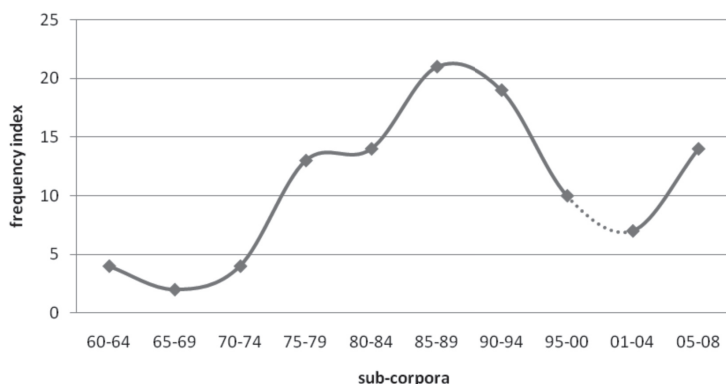


Figure 4: Use of communication

A possible explanation of this considerable change is that the general concept of communication was adopted and transformed into a very crucial concept of the discipline. In order to verify this hypothesis we have to analyze the semantic and conceptual development of the term. In the 1960s communication theory was brought into the marketing discipline. Marketing experts were dealing with communication models and applied them to the sales process (Décaudin 1995: 6). From this moment on they regarded selling mainly as a problem of communication (see (6)).

- (6) Si la production en matière de communication intéresse spécialement les directeurs de marketing, c'est que la vente conçue dans l'optique du marketing est essentiellement un problème de communication. (Fournis 1964: 11)

Later on in the 1970s the communication concept already referred to a whole set of measures, that is, not only advertising but also sales promotion, personal sales or public relations. Hence, the term *communication* became a universal key term of modern marketing. It has a very wide

and sometimes fuzzy meaning with more or less spontaneous semantic extensions. For example, from the 1980s on we find passages in which *communication* seems to mean ‘message’, as we can see in (7). Additionally, we come across an example of an elliptical use of *communication* in which it refers to a company’s communication department (see (8)).

- (7) Donc, une des techniques que nous commençons à utiliser aux Etats-Unis, est l’emploi des journaux pour atteindre nos prospects – leur forcer la main pour qu’ils nous disent s’ils sont intéressés par nos messages, nos communications. (Michon 1984: 92)
- (8) Ainsi les sociétés tendent à se doter de structures spécifiques de gestion des actions de parrainage publicitaire, leur budget étant rattaché à la direction de la communication, du marketing ou même à la direction générale. (Bikle/Roskis 1996:13)

Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that in contrast to the understanding of ‘communication’ in linguistics, ‘communication’ in marketing is unidirectional, i.e. not the exchange but the purposeful transmission of information to the recipient (customer) is of prime importance. This marketing-specific meaning of *communication* is underlined by the immediate context. In the following sentences it collocates, for example, with possessive pronouns and with verbs that imply directed actions (*axer sa communication* or *positionner sa communication*). It is suggested that ‘communication’ is something belonging to someone who is able to control it completely (see (9) and (10)).

- (9) Sur les sept magasins étudiés, un seul axe sa communication sur cet aspect. (Kalika 1984: 74)
- (10) En fonction de son image de marque et des ses objectifs, il reste à l’industriel à positionner la communication de son produit en fonction des courants auxquels il s’apparente le mieux. (Cathelat/Matricon 1976: 53)

5 What are the most important tendencies of term formation?

We now come to the last research question to be treated in this article: what are the most important tendencies of term formation? In order to answer this question we will analyze new basic terms in the different sub-corpora from a morphological and semantic perspective. Additionally, we will investigate the impact of French terminological politics that has always tried to eliminate anglicisms.

A high percentage of basic terms⁶ in the sub-corpora of the 1960s are one-word terms that are also part of everyday language and denote very basic concepts of marketing (e.g. *achat, besoin, client, clientèle, magasin, vente*, etc.). Other terms of the 1960s are special language terms that have been adopted from related disciplines, such as for example general business sciences, psychology or statistics (e.g. *commerce, consommateur, échantillon, efficacité, fournisseur, habitude, ménage, panel*, etc.). Within the two- and three-word terms we find more specific noun compounds with the preposition *de* inserted before the modifier (e.g. *comportement d’achat, leader d’opinion, promotion des ventes, or segment de marché*). Other noun compounds consist of a noun and an adjective (e.g. *message publicitaire, budget publicitaire, grand magasin, magasin populaire*, etc.). In general, most of these early compounds or word combinations are loan translations from English.

In the 1970s more and more noun compounds of the first type lost their preposition, in particular those which have very basic terms as modifiers (e.g. *budget marketing*, *concept produit*, *direction marketing*, *étude marketing*, *recherche marketing*, and *stratégie produit*)⁷. In 1971 and 1973, the first proposals of the official terminology committees were made. For example, in order to eliminate *ing*-forms, a committee suggested saying *franchisage* for *franchising* or *publipostage* for *mailing*. Analyzing the corpus, we see that there are only two occurrences of *franchisage*. But instead of *franchisage* the English term *franchise* recurs regularly in the corpora from the 1980s on. One can only speculate about the reasons for the greater acceptance of *franchise*. Perhaps French marketers preferred it to *franchisage* because of its shortness or the correspondence to the English term *franchise*, which also exists. Looking for the term *publipostage* we encounter relatively few instances of it in the period between 1970 and 2000. The anglicism *mailing* is used much more frequently. However, even though the use of *mailing* is still more frequent, *publipostage* occurs quite regularly in the latest corpora from 2001 until now. In the end, the word *publipostage* seems to find its way into the French marketing language.

From the late 1980s until today we notice a very strong tendency to form noun-noun compounds. The semantic relations between the nouns tend to be much more complex than they used to be before. First of all, there are appositional noun-noun compounds in which the two nouns correspond to each other and refer to the same referent (e.g. *client revendeur*, *enfant consommateur*, and *ménage acheteur*). Secondly, we find a great number of left-headed noun-noun compounds with multifaceted semantic relations to the modifier: *capital marque*, *marchand internet*, *marketing internet*, *marque ombrelle*, *marque sponsor*, *orientation client*, *orientation marché*, *plan d'action clientèle*. The semantic relations within these compounds cannot be explained by a simple is-a-equation. For example, in *capital marque* and *marque sponsor* the relations are specifications that could also be expressed by the insertion of the preposition *de*. Their semantic structure corresponds to the above-mentioned examples in which the modifier seems to have adjectival character (e.g. *budget marketing*, *concept produit*, etc.). In *marchand internet* and *marketing internet* the semantic relation can be regarded as local and could be paraphrased by *marchand sur internet* or *marketing sur internet*. In *marque ombrelle* there is a metaphorical relation between the two elements (*la marque est comme une ombrelle*). In *orientation client*, *orientation marché* and *plan d'action clientèle* the relations are those of direction or concern (*orientation vers le client*, *orientation vers le marché*, *plan d'action concernant la clientèle*). Thirdly, within the recent basic terms of the corpus, we find *maîtresse marque* as a translation of *master brand*, a term used to describe a certain type of global brand which is based on a powerful proposition or myth (Calver 2004: 22). *Maîtresse marque* is an example of a rather unusual right-headed noun-noun compound (see (11)). We should wait and see whether this marks a new trend of marketing term formation in French or not.

(11) Les Maîtresses Marques comme Nike, Sony et Coca-Cola définissent leur catégorie et sont fondées sur des mythes ou des histoires puissantes (par exemple, Levi's et le thème de l'indépendance, ou celui de la relation aux autres chez Nokia). (Baker/Sterenber/Taylor 2004: 67)

Apart from the noun-noun compounds, we have noticed prefixation as a very common pattern of term formation. Prefixation became popular from the 1990s onwards and especially in

the last corpus we find a lot of prefixations (e.g. *cyberconsommateur*, *éco-marketing*, *macro-marketing*, *multi-produits*, *super-marque* or *e-fidélité*, *e-marque*⁸).

The following table summarizes the described tendencies of term formation in the French marketing language described above (see Table 1).

Table 1: Tendencies of term formation

1960-	1970-	1985-
N de N	N (de) N	N N
comportement d'achat (1960-) décision d'achat (1960-) désir d'achat (1960-) étude de marché (1960-) méthode de marketing (1965-) promotion des ventes (1960-) segment de marché (1965-)	direction marketing (1970-) recherche marketing (1970-) budget marketing (1975-) étude marketing (1975-) stratégie produit (1980-) concept produit (1980-) service clientèle (1990-)	client revendeur (1985-) enfant consommateur (2005-) ménage acheteur (2001-) marque enseignée (2005-)
N ADJ		N N
activité commerciale (1960-) message publicitaire (1960-) budget publicitaire (1960-) campagne publicitaire (1960-) clientèle cible (1965-)		orientation client (1990-) relation client (1990-) orientation marché (2001-) plan d'action clientèle (1995-) marque ombrelle (1995-) marque sponsor (1995-) capital marque (2001-) marketing internet (2001-) marchand internet (2005-)
		N N
		maitresse marque (2004)
		Prefix N
		macro-marketing (1990-) maximarketing (1990-) éco-marketing (1995-) multi-produit (1995-) mono-produit (1995-) multi-marque (1990-) super-marque (2001-) cyberconsommateur (2001-) cyberacheteur (2001-) cybermarché (2001-) e-fidélité (2005-) e-marketing (2005-) e-commerçant (2005-) co-marquage (2005-) pseudo-parrainage (2005-)

A further question that should be addressed in the context of term formation in the French marketing language is the use of anglicisms. How many and which types of anglicisms are really used in (written) marketing language?⁹ To answer this question we have determined the number of anglicisms within the basic marketing terminology and found out that 63 % of the terms are anglicisms. This seems to be a rather high percentage. But if we take a closer look at these anglicisms, we see that most of them, that is 76 %, are loan translations like *chaîne de distribution* (*distribution channel*), *image de marque* (*brand image*), or *segmentation du marché* (*market segmentation*). 17 % are mixed forms, with elements of both languages like *marketing politique*, *management du marketing*, or *média-planning*, and only 7 % are direct loans like *leader*, *mailing*, *marketing*, or *sponsoring* (see Figure 5). Hence, we can say that there are not as many direct loans in written French marketing language as might have been expected.

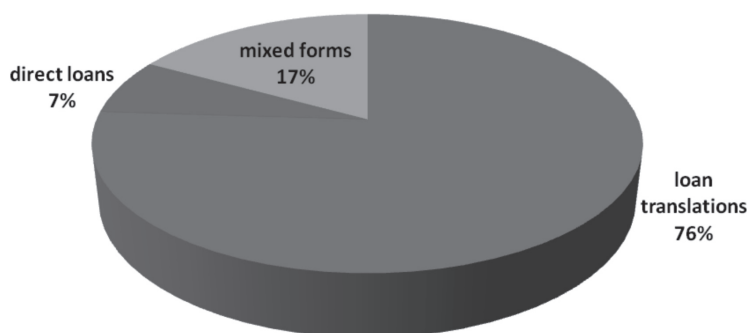


Figure 5: Types of anglicisms within the basic marketing terminology

6 Final remarks

To conclude, we want to add some brief comments. First of all, the presented study enriches LSP research by a new perspective. It combines, one could say, synchrony and diachrony by following the development of a terminology in order to give an overview of its current state. It was instructive to see how a terminology of a relatively young discipline like marketing grows and how the emergence of terms coincides with the development of the field. It would be interesting to see whether the described process also applies to other disciplines. Second, we think that the quantitative approach in combination with a qualitative analysis of the usage of certain terms has been successful and led to some remarkable results concerning the formation and lexicalization of terms in a special language. For example, we were able to follow the processes of establishment of the key-terms *marketing* and *communication* and to detect the main tendencies of term formation in different periods. Finally, the study has so far resulted in a corpus-based French marketing glossary with about 600 marketing terms and collocations that should also be helpful for translators and marketers (Hänchen 2002a: 157–185). Because of the corpus-based approach, users of the glossary can be sure that it quite representatively reflects the state of the art of current French marketing language. •

Notes

- ¹ It has been published in German in Hänchen (2002a).
- ² Association Nationale du Marketing.
- ³ However, in the following analyses we have to consider these differences in size. For example, they may be responsible for the slightly unproportional increase in basic terms between the sub-corpora 1996-2000 and 2001-2004 (see Figure 1).
- ⁴ The relative frequency is calculated by *Wordlist*.
- ⁵ I.e. the formation of more-word combinations containing the respective term (e.g. *marketing politique*, *stratégie (de) marketing*, *politique de communication*, etc.).
- ⁶ For reasons of complexity we are concentrating on nouns.
- ⁷ In cases like these the respective modifier nouns seem to have adjectival character.
- ⁸ In 2005 the Commission of terminologie proposed to use *marque en ligne*. The prefixation with e- is considered as improper (JO 2005).
- ⁹ We should bear in mind that there is quite probably a difference between written and spoken marketing language.

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