

Algerian leaders in the Hotel industry in times of transition: an exploratory study on the Marriott and El Djazair groups

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Abstract:

This exploratory study examines Marriott and El Djazair's strategies in Algeria in the context of ecological and digital transitions. The methodology combines semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis, and weighted TF-IDF lexical processing structured around five dimensions: international standards and frameworks, heritage and territorial anchoring, institutional and associative partnerships, digital tools and technologies, and socio-economic sustainability. Findings reveal specific forms in their origins and deployment. Marriott operates within recognised global frameworks, integrating connected technologies and management systems to enhance guest experience while reinforcing environmental commitments. El Djazair follows a locally rooted approach focused on heritage preservation, prudent resource management, and the promotion of artisanal know-how. The analysis underlines the need to align global standards with territorial specificities to strengthen the economic and environmental viability of the hospitality sector.

Keywords: Ecological transition; Digital transition; Hospitality; Algeria; Territorial anchoring; Sustainable governance.

1. Introduction

The global hospitality industry, in constant transformation, is currently at a major turning point, even at the crossroads of two major transitions: digital and ecological, which are profoundly shaping its practices and strategies. These transformations are part of a broader framework of globalization and increased awareness of environmental issues, which are affecting economic sectors on a scale never seen before. The acceleration of digitalization, coupled with a green revolution, is influencing not only the way services are delivered, but also the way firms must rethink their business models to remain competitive and responsible in a constantly changing world. Thus, the global hospitality industry is currently in a process of dual transformation where the challenge is to successfully combine the digitalization of services, to offer increasingly innovative and personalized customer experiences, with the implementation of ecological practices that reduce environmental impact while meeting the expectations of stakeholders, whether customers, regulators, or employees.

The health crisis has fueled interest in sustainable development among travelers, particularly younger generations. Criticism of the excesses of mass tourism and, more generally, social and environmental issues in the tourism industry have also come to the forefront. According to a survey conducted by the eco-friendly accommodation booking platform GreenGo (*) in September 2022, 86% of respondents believe that environmental impact is a determining factor in their travel choices.

In Algeria, where the hotel industry is experiencing growing momentum, national and international chains are faced with the need to adapt their business models in the face of major contemporary transitions: digital, ecological, and societal. In this context, groups such as Marriott and El Djazaïr are attempting to adopt transformation strategies, with the aim of reconciling economic performance requirements, international sustainability standards, and the territorial specificities of the Algerian context. However, how these ambitions are embodied in specific institutional, sociocultural, and infrastructural environments remains a central issue to be explored.

This contribution thus offers an in-depth analysis of the logic of strategic action in terms of digitalization and ecological transition in the Algerian hotel industry, through a comparative exploratory study of the Marriott and El Djazair groups. The objective is to highlight the modalities of articulation between economic imperatives, environmental commitments and territorial dynamics, while providing critical insight into the capacity of hotel stakeholders to engage in structural transformation trajectories.

From a methodological point of view, this research is part of an interpretivist perspective and uses a qualitative approach articulating three complementary devices. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers, employees and customers, in order to collect rich data on the

perceptions, practices and strategic orientations of the establishments which are studied. Then, a documentary analysis was carried out on institutional reports, official communications and internal policy documents, in order to identify the elements of discourse and action mobilized by each hotel group. Finally, a textual processing weighted by the TF-IDF method made it possible to identify and quantify the distinctive discursive markers within the corpora, thus providing objective insight into the dominant themes and their relative weight in the two analyzed models.

This multiple case study approach (Yin, 2014) compares two configurations: a transnational model aligned with international benchmarks (Marriott) and a national model more shaped by the constraints and resources of the Algerian market (El Djazaïr).

The central question guiding this research is the following:

How do the Marriott and El Djazaïr hotel chains manage to balance economic performance requirements, digital transition, and environmental commitment in an Algerian context marked by cultural, structural, and political specificities?

To answer this question, the article is structured in three complementary parts. In the first part, it sets out the conceptual framework that is used, clarifying the notions of digital transition, environmental sustainability and social responsibility applied to the hotel sector, while integrating the contributions of recent work in tourism economics and territorial development. In the second part, it details the survey methodology, based on a qualitative approach combining semi-structured interviews with key actors, documentary analysis of institutional sources and weighted textual processing using the TF-IDF method, in order to identify significant occurrences and themes. Finally, the third part presents and discusses the empirical results, putting into perspective the data from field observation and textual analysis, to shed light on the specific dynamics observed between the models that are studied and to draw operational and theoretical lessons from them.

2. Literary Review

The study of contemporary transformations in the hotel industry requires a multifaceted approach: the dynamics of ecological sustainability and digitalization are simultaneously redrawing the boundaries of production, governance, and consumption. Recent literature is organized around several complementary axes: changes in demand, the reconfiguration of organizational models, the territorial integration of sustainable practices, and the evaluation of strategies using quantitative and qualitative tools.

2.1. Ecological and Digital Transitions: Restructuring Hotel Models

Recent literature shows that the global hotel industry is undergoing a structural restructuring where two major transitions are converging: the ecological transition and the digital transition

(Gössling & Hall, 2019; UNWTO, 2021). The first involves the integration of sustainable development principles into management and operations (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Caire, 2004; Chiraz Ghozzi-Nekhili, 2011), whether it involves reducing carbon emissions, efficiently managing water and energy, or obtaining recognized certifications. The second is based on the accelerated adoption of digital tools: integrated systems, predictive analysis of customer data, and connected technologies to personalize the experience while optimizing resources (Buhalis & Leung, 2018). Indeed, it is a question of analyzing and understanding how environmental approaches now structure performance indicators? At the same time, the literature on “digital hospitality” highlights the role of technologies (AI, IoT, CRM) in the personalization and scalability of services Alonso-Almeida et al. (2015).

Several studies show that digitalization can be a lever for sustainability, particularly through real-time monitoring of energy consumption and predictive flow management. Customer evolution, fragmentation, sensitivity to sustainability, emergence of "digital natives", changes the competitive landscape. Empirical studies show the rise of eco-conscious segments and digital business tourism, while, in certain national contexts, institutional clientele retains a major influence (Corne & Robinot, 2016; Hergli et al., 2012). The success of this dual transition depends on their articulation rather than on their juxtaposition, an essential condition for reconciling economic performance and social responsibility. These changes force hotels to arbitrate between standardization (to capture the international market) and local differentiation (to meet contextual expectations).

2.2. Strategic Adaptive Convergence and Integrated Approaches

Winning strategies appear to be based on an evolutionary process of organizational adjustment, combining international standards and local anchors (Robertson, 1995; Hollinshead, 2016; Brouder et al., 2020). This integrated approach allows players to remain competitive while promoting their territorial identity (Cohen & Cohen, 2015). In the hotel industry, this adaptive convergence is reflected in the combination of environmental labels, local partnerships, and frugal innovation solutions adapted to territorial constraints (Camus et al., 2021). Case studies in the Mediterranean and North Africa (Chiraz Ghozzi-Nekhili, 2011; Leroux & Ferhane, 2017) show that this combination is particularly relevant in environments where material resources and digital skills remain unequally distributed.

2.3. Governance, Territorial Anchoring and Contextual Adaptation

Research on hotel governance emphasizes the importance of strong territorial anchoring and adaptation to local specificities to ensure the sustainability initiatives (Evans, 1995; Darden, 2008). The effectiveness of environmental and social policies in the sector depends not only on the strategic choices of general management, but also on their ability to engage with local stakeholders (communities, associations, suppliers) and to integrate their expectations into planning (Mbembe, 2016; Rakotomalala-Ramandimbarison, 2019). In this perspective, the literature on sustainable tourism in North Africa and the Mediterranean (Hergli et al., 2012; Leroux & Ferhane, 2017) emphasizes that contextual adaptation is a key condition for the appropriation of sustainable policies. The most successful initiatives are those that combine, within inclusive governance, global know-how and a detailed understanding of local socio-economic and environmental issues.

The emergence of networks (international alliances, labels, local cooperation) profoundly changes access to markets and the legitimacy of sustainable practices. International certifications and partnerships function as signals of trust (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015), while alliances with local actors (associations, universities, cooperatives) help anchor sustainability in territories (Leroux & Ferhane, 2017). Your comparative analysis Marriott / El Djazaïr finds here a theoretical framework to interpret the differences between global networks and local cooperation. Recurring criticisms (Banerjee, cited in the literature; Caire, 2004) remind us that the adoption of standards and labels does not guarantee balanced social or territorial performance and can lead to greenwashing effects or social externalities. Corne & Robinot (2016) and Rakotomalala-Ramandimbarison (2019) insist on the need for multi-criteria indicators (economic, environmental, social) to measure real sustainability.

3 . Methodology and Method of the Empirical Study

3.1. Presentation of the Cases and Justification for the Choice of the El Djazaïr and Marriott groups

The choice to compare El Djazaïr and Marriott is based on their heuristic value in analyzing two hotel action logics located at structural opposites, but participating in the same competitive environment. El Djazaïr, a historic establishment anchored in the Bay of Algiers and publicly owned and managed by the National Social Insurance Fund, constitutes a privileged case to study the constraints

and room for maneuver of a state model in the face of the demands of digital and ecological transition. Marriott, a major transnational player, embodies the capacity of a globalized chain to adapt its international standards to a market characterized by strict state regulations, specific social expectations and singular political contexts. This approach makes it possible to grasp the dynamics of openness and identity preservation in the contemporary Algerian hotel industry, where globalized benchmarks and deep-rooted territorial imperatives coexist.

3. 2. Methodological Approach and Survey System

From an interpretivist and exploratory perspective, this research is part of an inductive approach, mobilizing a qualitative approach of multiple cases (multiple case study, Miles & Huberman, 1994). The objective is to highlight the modalities of articulation between economic imperatives, digital and ecological transitions, and territorial dynamics specific to the Algerian context. The field of study covers the Marriott establishments in Algiers, Constantine and Annaba, as well as the establishments of the El Djazair group: Gourara (Timimoun), Kerdada (Boussaada), El Caid (El Bayadh), Saoura (Bechar), El Djazair (Algiers) and El Riadh (Sidi Fredj).

Data collection is based on:

- Seventeen semi-structured interviews conducted between November 2024 and March 2025 with senior executives, quality managers, technical engineers, and project managers. The interviews, conducted in person or remotely (WhatsApp), were recorded with explicit consent and transcribed in full.
- Documentary analysis of CSR reports, internal charters, institutional communications, documents from local partnerships, and environmental standards.
- In situ and indirect observation of the establishments' digital platforms (websites, reservation systems, social media).

The sampling was purposive according to functional relevance criteria (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016), targeting stakeholders with a strategic or operational vision of the transitions studied.

3.3. Data Analysis Method

The interviews were processed using thematic coding inspired by Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014), combining open and axial coding to structure the data around nine thematic axes: Status of digital and ecological initiatives; Objectives and strategic logic of the transitions undertaken; Partnerships and collaborations in the implementation of

transitions; Support for change and staff involvement; levers for action; representations and strategic positioning, Digitalization in the service of territorial attractiveness; Heritage tourism development and ecological enhancement systems. Formalized environmental strategies: existence of benchmarks, charters, green labeling, performance indicators.

The textual data (verbatim and documents) were subjected to TF-IDF (Term Frequency–Inverse Document Frequency) processing via lexicometric pre-processing (cleaning, lemmatization, and stop-word removal). This weighting made it possible to identify discriminating terms and extract discourse markers specific to each hotel chain, thus strengthening the granularity of the comparison. Finally, a triangulation principle was applied, comparing results from interviews, documents, and observations of digital devices to consolidate the interpretative robustness and internal validity of the analyses.

4. Results

4.1. Digital Transition and Distribution Strategies: Comparative Analysis

4.1.1. Technological Integration and Operational Transformation

The digital transition in the hotel industry is taking shape through the targeted deployment of innovative tools, structured around three operational centers.

Front Desk and Customer Service

In the lobby and at check-in, check-in kiosks and tablets automate arrivals and departures, while digital keys and smart locks secure room access. Digital display boards centralize essential information (timetables, events), strengthening guest autonomy.

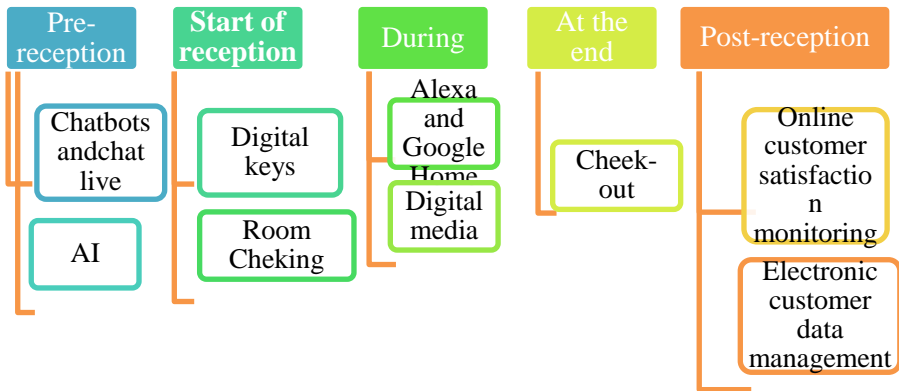
a) Front of House Spaces

Digitalization is centered around catering services, where QR codes and touchscreen tablets replace physical menus, optimizing ordering. Meeting rooms and coworking spaces integrate videoconferencing equipment, USB ports, and scanners, meeting the needs of professionals. Rooms, equipped with smart home automation, connected TVs, Chromecast, and voice assistants, aim to personalize comfort, supported by high-performance Wi-Fi access.

b) Back of House and Organizational Support

Maintenance relies on predictive software to anticipate breakdowns, while human resource management is optimized through planning, inventory tracking, and replenishment tools. Employees use

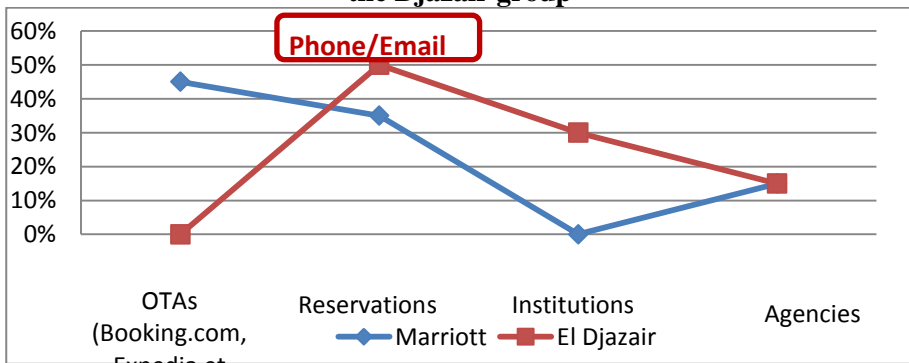
tablets and smartphones to coordinate tasks, coupled with internal communication platforms. This technological integration, although requiring initial investments and appropriate training, illustrates a strategy aimed at reconciling operational efficiency, cost reduction improved customer experience, while preserving the human dimension.



4.1.2. In Praise of the Difference in Strategic Choices: Why El Djazair Challenges the Dogmas of Global Management

En refusant les OTAs, les algorithmes et la clientèle internationale, El Djazaïr incarne une résistance économique délibérée, s’inspirant des travaux de Darden (2008) sur les stratégies alter-globalisation. Son approche questionne l’impératif d’uniformisation numérique, proposant une alternative ancrée dans les réalités socio-culturelles maghrébines.

Figure 01: Overnight distribution strategies at the Marriott group and the Djazair group



Source : Survey results, 2023.

Hotel room bookings reveal heterogeneous distribution dynamics between global and local players. Comparative data from Marriott and El Djazair reveals structural disparities: while 45% of Marriott's bookings are made through Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) such as Booking.com or Expedia, El Djazair shows 00% dependence on these platforms (Internal data, 2023). Conversely, 50% of El Djazair's bookings come from internalized digital channels, compared to 35% for Marriott, illustrating a distinct prioritization of direct digitalization.

The Marriott chain aims to deploy online booking services and free itself from online sales services, which allows it to eliminate transaction commissions (15% to 20%) taken by intermediaries, to obtain information on the navigation path and customer experience, to enhance its brand image on a direct booking site, unlike OTAs which compare hotels based on price, surface area, location, etc, and to recover useful data for customer relationship management. The El Djazair chain is lagging behind in terms of digitalization. Its investment capacities are less advanced on the digital front.

4.1.3. Comparison of Personalization Media and their Commercial Impact in the two Hotel Chains

Table 01: Supports for Customization and Strategic Differentiation

Criteria	Marriott	El Djazair
Digital Support	Mobile application with AI, integrated wallet, push notifications	Basic website, reliance on traditional channels
Personalization	Localized offers, algorithmic recommendations	Static benefits (institutional pricing)
Partner Network	Global (airline, luxury) and local (ecotourism) partnerships	Few external collaborations, focus on wealth management
Commercial Impact	15% increase in direct bookings, 45% revenue through MICE	Predominantly institutional clientele (70%), low diversification

Source : Survey results, 2025.

The gaps observed between Marriott and El Djazair are largely explained by the digital maturity of personalization tools. Marriott relies on an integrated digital ecosystem, where AI and geolocation are major levers for anticipating and stimulating demand. The measured gains (+15% direct bookings) demonstrate the ability of this

model to convert personalization into commercial performance, reinforced by a diversified partner network that feeds a constant flow of high-value customers. In contrast, El Djazaïr maintains an approach based on human relationships and traditional channels, suited to an institutional clientele but less able to capture new segments. The limited use of personalization technologies and the absence of international strategic alliances limit the commercial scope of its actions. Nevertheless, this heritage and territorialized orientation gives the chain a relational authenticity that is difficult to reproduce in standardized hotel environments.

4.2. Unevenly Structured Trajectories of Hotel Sustainability: between globalization of standards and territorial anchoring

4.2.1. Globalized Alignment: Marriott's Trajectory

Our findings highlight contrasting evolutionary trajectories and persistent tensions between economic imperatives and environmental issues in the hotel sector. Marriott illustrates this dynamic with its recent commitment: after joining the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance in September 2021, then the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) network in October 2022, the chain has strengthened its strategy through a partnership with Amex GBT to expand access to its "green" accommodations, aligning its model with international sustainability standards.

4.2.2. Gradual contextualization: El Djazaïr's strategy

The El Djazaïr chain embodies an approach structured by global-local asymmetries, where the ecological transition is rolled out in stages based on timescales and contextual constraints, adapted to local socio-economic realities. This commitment is reflected in its 2023 Green Hospitality Report, in which the CEO details coordinated initiatives:

- a system for monitoring environmental indicators via a mobile application and an intranet platform,
- energy performance benchmarking to guide internal practices,
- awareness and training programs co-developed with key stakeholders such as the Algerian Association for Ecotourism, the Mediterranean Network for Responsible Hospitality, and the National Institute for Training in Environmental Professions.

These collaborations reflect a strategy rooted in the region, prioritizing local synergies to maximize impact while maintaining flexibility in the face of structural constraints.

4.2.3. An Institutional Clientele and Prudent Governance

In a context where sustainable development requirements are redrawing the contours of hotel performance, the public chain El Djazaïr is deploying a strategy based on the gradual adjustment of its practices. Unlike some international chains that undertake a systemic and often exogenous transformation, El Djazaïr is developing an approach rooted in territorial logic, consistent with the specificities of its predominantly institutional clientele—senior government officials, military delegations, diplomats, and political figures.

This sensitive clientele, carrying symbolic capital, largely determines management orientations and imposes a form of strategic discretion combining technological restraint, operational security, and alignment with national priorities.

4.2.4. Hotels as Territorial Laboratories of Sustainability

Far from standardized standards, the chain's hotels function as places of territorial experimentation, where the adoption of sustainability standards is achieved through capillary action and negotiation. The *El Djazaïr* Hotel in Algiers is at the heart of this dynamic, with:

- an energy efficiency plan,
- water management optimization solutions,
- environmental training modules in partnership with the National Institute of the Environment and CENEAP,
- internal digital tools (monitoring application, intranet platform for inter-hotel benchmarking, centralization of practical reference materials).

4.2.5. Regional Diversification of Practices

Each establishment in the group develops its own identity:

Gourara Hotel (Timimoun): sustainable oasis tourism, partnerships with the Timimoun Vert Association and the Tazalit women's cooperative, bioclimatic architecture, integration of artisanal circuits.

- **Saoura Hotel (Bechar):** partnerships with Taghit Ecology and the University of Bechar for water management and the preservation of desert landscapes.
- **Kerdada Hotel (Boussaada):** cultural and spiritual tourism, networking of places of memory and digital heritage integration.
- **El Caid Hotel (Ghardaia):** ethno-cultural tourism, partnership with the Mozabite Association for Sustainable Culture and the CNRA, promotion of sustainable architectural know-how.

The cross-analysis of field observations, semi-structured interviews, and institutional documents highlighted two distinctly different hotel sustainability trajectories: a globalized alignment at Marriott and a gradual contextualization at El Djazaïr. This adaptation is reflected not only in distinct operational choices, but also in specific discursive repertoires. In order to go beyond the purely qualitative analysis and objectify these trends, we carried out a lexical analysis weighted by TF-IDF on the entire corpus. This approach made it possible to identify the key discriminating terms and measure their relative importance, thus revealing the linguistic markers most representative of each hotel strategy. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section.

4.3. Weighted TF-IDF lexical analysis: highlight the distinctive discursive markers of the actions and strategies of the two hotel groups in the face of the two transitions

The TF-IDF analysis applied to the entire corpus (institutional documents, interview transcripts, and observation notes) allows us to identify the most discriminating key terms between the two chains studied. This method, by weighting term frequencies by their inverse document frequency, highlights the lexical specificities of each strategic discourse. The results are broken down into three levels: overall lexical trends, contrasting thematic profiles, and radar visualization of dominant terms.

The TF-IDF analysis of the interviews highlights five major lexical classes, corresponding to the themes defined in the methodology. The values that are obtained reflect the intensity and specificity of the terms used by each hotel group (Table 2).

Table 2: TF-IDF scores by class (lemmatized forms)

Class	Marriott Group	El Djazaïr Group
International standards and benchmarks	0,243	0,071
Heritage and territorial roots	0,088	0,261
Institutional and community partnerships	0,064	0,192
Digital tools and technologies	0,215	0,103
Socio-economic sustainability	0,146	0,184

Source : Survey results, 2025

Marriott's high standards, benchmarks, and digital technology values reflect its focus on integrating international standards and technological innovation. Conversely, El Djazaïr's strong focus on

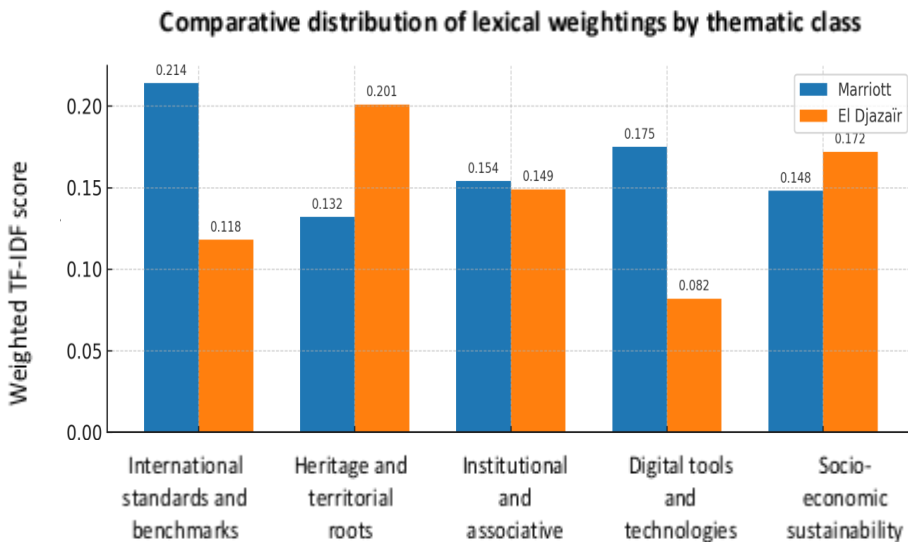
heritage, local partnerships, and socioeconomic sustainability demonstrates its territorial roots and its commitment to local networks.

4.3.1. General Lexical Trends and Weightings

The distribution of TF-IDF scores reveals a clear hierarchy of thematic categories in the discourse of both chains.

For Marriott, the International Standards and Frameworks category dominates (0.214 for sustainability, 0.198 for partnership), reflecting a strong alignment with global standards (Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, GSTC). The Digital Tools and Technologies category follows with high weightings (IA: 0.175), illustrating a strategy of differentiation through digital innovation. At El Djazaïr, the highest weighting is in the Heritage and Territorial Anchoring category (heritage: 0.201; territory: 0.194), confirming a discourse focused on cultural identity and local specificities. The Socioeconomic Sustainability category is also well represented (sobriety: 0.172), indicating an anchoring in a gradual transition adapted to structural constraints.

Figure 2: TF-IDF Comparison by Hotel Chain (Bar Chart)



Source : Survey results, 2025

The interpretation shows that Marriott uses a vocabulary aligned with the standards of globalized sustainable tourism, while El Djazaïr

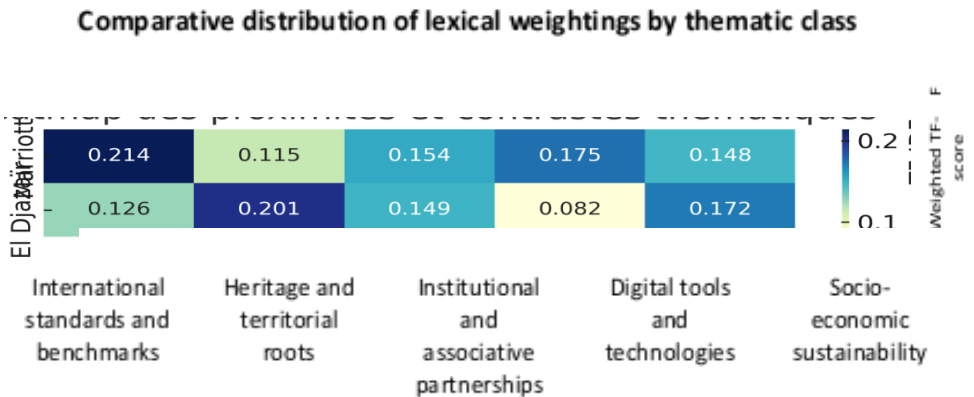
favors an identity and territorial lexicon, consistent with its institutional clientele and its local partnerships.

4.3.2. Mapping of Thematic Proximities and Contrasts: reading the heatmap

The heatmap shows that some categories converge in both corpora, notably Institutional and Associative Partnerships, where the weightings are similar (ecotourism: Marriott 0.152; El Djazair 0.149). This reflects a common core of engagement with local stakeholders, even if the nature of the partnerships differs (global for Marriott, local for El Djazair).

However, the divergences are pronounced in Digital Tools and Technologies (+0.093 in favor of Marriott) and Heritage and Local Anchoring (+0.089 in favor of El Djazair). Marriott relies on digitalization to optimize the customer experience, while El Djazair strengthens its legitimacy by promoting local heritage and know-how. Thus, while a core of shared values exists around sustainability and partnerships, the discursive priorities diverge profoundly depending on the strategic trajectories.

Figure 3 : Heatmap TF-IDF par terme et par chaîne



Source : Survey results, 2025

The thematic structure resulting from this matrix illustrates two discursive logics:

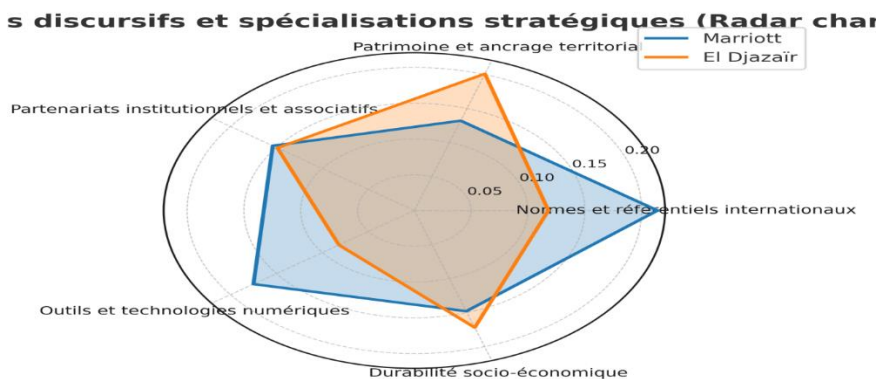
- **Marriott:** discourse of normative conformity and international projection.
- **El Djazair:** discourse of territorial anchoring and local appropriation of sustainability.

4.3.3. Discursive Profiles and Strategic Specializations: reading the radar chart

The radar visually illustrates the distribution of weights by class. Marriott presents a balanced profile, with strong amplitudes in International Standards and Frameworks (0.214) and Digital Tools and Technologies (0.175), but also intermediate values in Institutional and Associative Partnerships (0.154) and Socio-Economic Sustainability (0.148).

This configuration reflects a multidimensional model aimed at reconciling economic performance, global integration, and innovation. El Djazaïr, on the other hand, adopts a polarized profile around Heritage and Territorial Anchorage (0.201) and Socio-Economic Sustainability (0.172), with lower scores in Digital Tools and Technologies (0.082). This positioning reflects a strategy of territorial consolidation, favoring slow, and controlled technological adaptation in favor of strong cultural anchorage.

Figure 4: Radar of thematic fields weighted by TF-IDF



Source : Survey results, 2025

The combined reading of this radar and the other graphs shows the two channels diverge not only in content, but in the very structure of their discourse, Marriott favoring thematic diversification and El Djazaïr consolidating a narrative focused around its identity markers.

5. Discussion and analysis of results

The combined analysis of TF-IDF values, interviews, and institutional documents partially confirms the lessons learned from the literature on sustainable and digital transformation in the hotel industry (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Corne & Robinot, 2016; Hergli

et al., 2012), but also reveals new dimensions that reflect the specificity of the Algerian context and the uniqueness of the strategies implemented by Marriott and El Djazaïr. These results go beyond the simple application of universal models to highlight intersecting socio-territorial logics adapted to a specific institutional and cultural environment.

The TF-IDF analyses reveal significant differences in the weighting and co-occurrence of terms related to the five thematic classes that are identified. At Marriott, class 1 (“digitalization”) is dominated by software, reservations, automation, associated with a normative and standardized vision, while at El Djazaïr, the same concepts appear more dispersed and integrated into narratives of local adaptation. Similarly, class 3 (“ecology and sustainable practices”) presents a vocabulary oriented towards certification and green marketing in Marriott documents, while El Djazaïr mobilizes more terms such as heritage, authentic or tradition, revealing an ecology anchored in identity and not only in labels. By comparing these results with the interviews, several points of convergence and divergence appear, opening onto six themes that the literature had not fully anticipated and which constitute major original contributions.

5.1 Emerging Themes not Anticipated by the Literature

Weight of the implicit local regulatory constraint

The terms authorities, procedure and control, present in class 4 of both hotels, are linked to international standards for Marriott and to local adaptation for El Djazaïr. This tacit regulation, negotiated in practice, influences the prioritization and pace of projects. This phenomenon, absent from purely normative frameworks (Evans, 1995; Darden, 2008), requires a more detailed reading of the divergent regulations.

“Pragmatic” use of Digital Technology

Contrary to the dominant paradigm (Robertson, 1995; Mbembe, 2016) which positions digital as a marketing tool, Marriott and El Djazaïr use it mainly to compensate for staff shortages, particularly in logistics and maintenance. Class 1 TF-IDFs and interviews converge on this back-office orientation.

Co-evolution of International and Local Standards

The networks of co-occurrences link charter, culture and standard to Algerian tradition and hospitality, showing an active integration of local codes into international standards. This phenomenon goes

beyond the specific cases observed by Leroux & Ferhane (2017) and shows a structural combination.

Strategic Valuation of Scarcity

The absence of certain environmental labels is used by El Djazaïr as a marketing argument for authenticity, using the terms original and heritage. This strategy reverses the model where labeling is universally sought (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015).

“Underground” and Non-communicating Ecology

Certain sustainable practices (reuse of materials, short supply chains) are deliberately kept out of promotional materials. Given little weight in the TF-IDF of documents, they appear strongly in interviews, breaking with the dominant green marketing (Corne & Robinot, 2016).

Role of Relational Capital in Sustainability

The terms partner, trust, relationship connect multiple classes in co-occurrence networks, highlighting the strategic importance of local personal networks for the success of sustainable projects, confirming and extending relational approaches (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

5.2 Perspective with the Literature and Original Contribution

These results confirm that sustainability and digitalization cannot be solely understood through the global prisms of corporate governance or hotel marketing. In an emerging market like Algeria, the interactions between tacit regulatory constraints, relational strategies, cultural syncretism, and economic trade-offs are reshaping transformation trajectories.

Our field observations in Algeria confirm that this articulation remains incomplete. Marriott’s digital initiatives focus primarily on customer personalization and internal optimization, while ecological approaches, although present, remain marginal in the overall strategy. Conversely, El Djazaïr is adopting visible environmental practices (plastic reduction, green space management) but is struggling to integrate digital tools into daily management. This gap partly explains the differences in perceptions noted in our TF-IDF analysis, where terms, associated with technological innovation, appear more frequent at Marriott, while words related to heritage and nature dominate in El Djazaïr’s corpus.

Our results confirm Marriott, as an international chain, applies a weakly contextualized crossover approach, favoring broadly uniform standards, resulting in standardized digital content and a homogeneous brand identity. In contrast, El Djazaïr practices a strong interweaving of local specificities, integrating Algerian history and architecture into

its communications and services, but at the cost of weak standardization and lower visibility on international platforms. This strategic opposition is clearly reflected in the co-occurrence networks we generated: at Marriott, cross-class ties strongly link “technology,” “customer experience,” and “service,” while at El Djazaïr, the densest connections combine “culture,” “history,” and “hospitality.”

Our analysis of our corpus also reveals that, at Marriott, governance is highly centralized, resulting in a certain uniformity of messages, but also low visibility of local collaborations in official communications. TF-IDF terms related to local cooperation, such as crafts, local suppliers, or regional products, appear marginally in Marriott’s texts. Conversely, El Djazaïr highlights these dimensions more in its communications, but without articulating these initiatives with an overall strategic vision or a standardized environmental impact measurement. This dichotomy is reflected in our combined co-occurrence networks: at El Djazaïr, the links between “sustainable development” and “local culture” are dense, but weakly connected to technological terms or operational optimization, which may limit the scope of these initiatives on an international scale.

The original contribution of this research is in the proposal of an explanatory framework integrating:

- implicit regulation and its effects on operational implementation;
- the pragmatic use of digital technology focused on internal support rather than solely on customer experience;
- normative and cultural syncretism as a differentiating factor;
- the valorization of scarcity as a competitive strategy;
- unpublicized ecology as a discreet but structural practice;
- relational capital as a central lever of sustainability.

On a theoretical level, these results invite us to enrich models of hotel sustainability by integrating relational and contextual factors, which have been understudied until now. On a practical level, they provide hotel managers and public decision-makers with keys to adjust strategies to the institutional, cultural and social specificities of emerging markets.

6. Conclusion

This study explored, through a multi-method analysis combining in situ observations, documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and lexicometric processing weighted by TF-IDF, the distinct sustainability trajectories adopted by two hotel chains operating in structurally and

culturally distinct contexts: Marriott, a highly standardized global player, and El Djazaïr, a public group anchored in Algerian territorial realities.

Our results show Marriott favors a strategy of subordinate integration and convergence toward transnational standards, centered around compliance with international norms, the development of transnational partnerships, and an intensification of the use of advanced digital technologies. This model translates into a diversification of market segments, an acceleration of digital transformation, and an explicit alignment with recognized sustainability standards (Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, GSTC). Conversely, El Djazaïr embodies a gradual contextualization, where sustainability is part of a heritage and socio-economic logic, gradually integrating digital tools while maintaining a strong institutional customer base .

This approach highlights the ability of a hotel player to maintain strategic coherence between its practices, resources, and markets, in a context where regulatory constraints and socio-cultural expectations weigh on investment and innovation choices. Academically, the study contributes to the literature on hotel sustainability (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Jones et al., 2016) by demonstrating that the dichotomy between global standardization and local adaptation is not limited to a resource-constrained choice. It can also constitute a conscious strategic positioning, modulated by intangible assets (cultural capital, institutional reputation) and territorial partnerships. The integration of TF-IDF analysis as a tool for measuring discursive priorities also enriches the methodological arsenal for comparative studies.

For hotel decision-makers, the results highlight the importance of aligning sustainability strategies with structural assets and target markets. Global chains can capitalize on standardization and technology to maintain their competitive advantage, while territorialized actors can differentiate themselves by leveraging cultural resources and building strong local alliances. The implementation of combined approaches, combining digital innovation and territorial anchoring, could offer a promising middle ground. By combining qualitative data (observations, interviews) and weighted lexicometric analysis, our approach goes beyond a simple description of practices to access the implicit strategic priorities of stakeholders. This methodology offers potential application in other tourism sectors, particularly in North-South comparisons or in the study of chains operating simultaneously on several continents.

This research focuses on two contrasting cases, which limits the statistical generalizability of the results. Future studies could expand the sample to other regional or international chains and incorporate a longitudinal analysis to track the evolution of discursive and operational trajectories. The integration of quantitative measures of environmental performance (carbon footprint, energy consumption) would also provide a more robust triangulation of the results.

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