

Sanitation Transparency on Social Media and Its Influence on Guest Trust, Hotel Image, and Satisfaction

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Hotels increasingly treat sanitation as a signal of reputation and health assurance after the pandemic, yet many still do not communicate their standards openly. This study aims to analyze the influence of hotel sanitation standard transparency on social media on guest trust, hotel image, and customer satisfaction in Tasikmalaya City. Grounded in Signaling Theory, the study used an associative quantitative approach with a cross-sectional online questionnaire completed by 100 guests or prospective guests of eight star-rated hotels, recruited through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics 26 using validity, reliability, classical assumption, and simple linear regression tests. Sanitation transparency had a positive and significant relationship with guest trust ($b = 0.755$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.751$), hotel image ($b = 0.728$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.577$), and customer satisfaction ($b = 0.859$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.673$), so all three hypotheses were supported. Transparent digital hygiene communication therefore works as a credible quality signal that reduces consumer skepticism. Hotel managers should treat sanitation disclosure on social media as a core communication strategy, and local tourism authorities may develop guidelines for digital hygiene communication.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction; Guest Trust; Hotel Image; Sanitation Transparency; Signaling Theory; Social Media; Star-Rated Hotels

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry worldwide has experienced a structural shift in the last decade, driven largely by changing guest expectations in the wake of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic (Lew et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2024). The most striking change in tourist consumption behavior is how cleanliness and hygiene are understood. Before the pandemic, hotel cleanliness was largely assumed to be a given standard that occurred behind the scenes, a passive operation rather than an active part of the value proposition. In the contemporary hospitality market, however, guests no longer simply assume that a hotel is clean and safe. They demand active, verifiable, and visually communicable proof in the form of hygiene and sanitation protocols that they can evaluate before making a booking decision (Godovykh et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2024). This behavior reflects a heightened need for health assurance, which has become an essential psychological safety driver in tourist behavior.

To build and manage their reputation in this demanding climate, hospitality providers increasingly rely on digitalization strategies, particularly in the management of digital information and communication (Sumali et al., 2024). The pandemic also pushed service firms to adapt quickly and to rely more on digital channels to meet changing consumer demands (Kee et al., 2026). In this setting, digital trust is critical. Information transparency on social media platforms, aimed at building brand trust, serves as a core pillar of a reliable and modern hospitality digitalization ecosystem (Kim & Kim, 2017). This is consistent with the concept of experience commerce, where digital technologies are used to enrich consumer interactions, reduce purchase uncertainty, and support reputation management in the service sector (Damart & Nazmah, 2024). Among digital channels, social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have evolved beyond simple marketing showcases. They are now public relations and communication hubs used to project corporate identity, showcase operational excellence, interact directly with guests, and influence reservation decisions in real time (Masrukhan & Roker, 2025).

Despite these advances, a communication gap remains evident in the industry. Many hotels have invested heavily in sanitation technologies and rigorous hygiene protocols behind the scenes, yet it is far less clear that these measures are communicated transparently on digital channels, even though the way hygiene information is presented online shapes guests' trust (Godovykh et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2026). Without such communication, the psychological benefits of hygiene investments are not fully realized, because customer perceptions of safety and subsequent brand trust depend heavily on how safety measures are communicated and visualized, and not merely on technical execution. An empirical investigation is therefore needed to understand how the transparency of sanitation standards on social media affects guest trust, hotel image, and customer satisfaction in a competitive regional market such as Tasikmalaya City, West Java.

In the context of regional tourism development in Tasikmalaya City, the hospitality sector faces intense competition that requires strong brand differentiation. Local hotels must establish unique value propositions to capture their market segments. Using social media to demonstrate health and hygiene integrity is an under-explored yet potent differentiation tool. By shifting sanitation from a hidden back-of-house operational task to a front-of-house digital reputation asset, hotels can foster stronger relationships with travelers (Sugiarti, 2024).

Prior literature has established that hygiene and cleanliness are major predictors of hotel selection and consumer satisfaction, especially during and after global public health crises (Sun et al., 2023). Hotels also increasingly adopt sanitation technologies, such as ultraviolet-C (UV-C) disinfection devices, automated robotic cleaning, and high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration, and research shows that perceived safety and hygiene are central to guests' acceptance of technology-based hotel services such as service robots (Parvez et al., 2024). However, a scholarly gap persists because most studies focus on the technical efficacy of these tools or on the general influence of social media marketing on occupancy (Damart & Nazmah, 2024; Sugiarti, 2024). Empirical research on how the transparent digital communication of these standards affects guest trust and corporate reputation remains scarce, particularly in developing regional tourism destinations such as Tasikmalaya.

This study aims to analyze the effect of hotel sanitation standard transparency on social media on guest trust, hotel image, and customer satisfaction among guests and prospective guests of star-rated hotels in Tasikmalaya City. The study offers several points of novelty. First, it integrates operational hospitality hygiene with consumer-based digital marketing psychology, shifting the focus from possessing high technical hygiene standards to communicating these standards strategically and transparently in digital spaces (Gishen & Yin, 2026; Zhang et al., 2026). Second, while earlier Indonesian studies have mostly explored social media management in broad marketing terms, such as promotional reach and brand awareness, this study uses a specialized trust metric, the Electronic Word of Mouth Trust Scale (EWTs), to examine the psychological impact of hygiene information. Third, by focusing on Tasikmalaya, the study provides empirical insight for regional hospitality enterprises, showing that digital trust can serve as a competitive tool against larger and more established hotel brands. The findings are significant for hotel managers who design digital communication strategies and for local tourism authorities who support destination competitiveness, and they contribute to the literature by extending Signaling Theory to sanitation communication in the hospitality sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Signaling Theory

This study is anchored in Signaling Theory to explain the communication dynamics between hotels and potential guests. Originally developed in economics to address information asymmetry, the theory describes how one party (the sender) sends signals about quality or intent to another party (the receiver) to influence the receiver's evaluation and behavior (Connelly et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2023). Signaling theory distinguishes three essential components, namely the signal sender, the signal receiver, and the signal itself, and it has been applied to hotel marketing to explain how marketers send signals that consumers evaluate before purchase (Gishen & Yin, 2026).

In the hotel industry, potential guests face substantial information asymmetry before arrival. Because hospitality services are high-involvement, experience-based goods, guests cannot directly observe the safety and hygiene practices of a hotel beforehand. To reduce this uncertainty, travelers actively seek cues of quality. Transparently disclosing sanitation procedures, certifications, daily cleaning routines, and chemical safety on social media serves as a credible and verifiable signal that the hotel operates with high standards (Sun et al., 2023). In this study, the hotel is the sender, sanitation standard transparency on social media is the signal, and guests or prospective guests are the receivers whose trust, image perceptions, and satisfaction represent their response to the signal.

Sanitation Standard Transparency on Social Media

Information transparency is defined as the active and open disclosure of both positive and negative organizational information, and it represents a fundamental condition for a robust relationship between brands and consumers (Kim & Kim, 2017). Under Signaling Theory, transparency increases the credibility of a signal, thereby reducing consumer skepticism and perceived risk. In this study, sanitation standard transparency refers to the extent to which a hotel openly, reliably, and comprehensibly discloses its sanitation protocols, chemical standards, housekeeping schedules, and health certifications on its social media channels. When a hotel shares behind-the-scenes proof of sanitation, such as visual posts of housekeeping standards, UV-C disinfection, or staff hygiene training, this digital signaling strengthens guests' cognitive evaluations and supports trust, positive corporate association, and a satisfactory experience (Zhang et al., 2026). Evidence from peer-to-peer accommodation shows that the type of cleanliness information provided, such as host sanitation labels, platform cleaning protocols, and previous guests' reviews, has significant effects on guests' trust and behavioral intentions (Godovykh et al., 2023).

Guest Trust, Hotel Image, and Customer Satisfaction

Guest trust is the guest's willingness to rely on the hotel's claims regarding safety, hygiene, and service quality. It is commonly measured with the EWTs, which captures three cognitive dimensions: ability, integrity, and benevolence (Weitzl, 2017). Electronic word of mouth has been linked to room purchase decisions in Indonesian hotels (Agustino & Wulansari, 2024), and brand trust has been shown to carry the effects of customer engagement and service evaluation into word-of-mouth and reuse intentions in hotels (Chen et al., 2022). Hotel image represents the overall cognitive and emotional perception of the hotel brand held by the public, including its professional standing, modern standards, and prestige, and it is a core element of corporate reputation (Kim & Kim, 2017). Customer satisfaction is the overall evaluation of stay comfort and the confirmation of guest expectations, including expectations regarding hygiene and safety (Kee et al., 2026; Maheswari et al., 2025).

Hypotheses Development

Sanitation Transparency and Guest Trust

Because guests cannot observe hygiene practices before arrival, transparent sanitation information on social media gives them evidence about the hotel's ability, integrity, and benevolence. Studies of hygiene information in tourist accommodation indicate that the way hygiene information is expressed online shapes customers' institutional and cognitive trust (Zhang et al., 2026), and transparency has been identified as a direct precursor of brand trust (Kim & Kim, 2017). Empirical evidence points in the same direction. Cleanliness information provided by hosts and platforms, including sanitation labels and cleaning protocols, has significant effects on guests' trust and behavioral intentions (Godovykh et al., 2023), and trust is a key mechanism through which hotel service evaluation translates into word-of-mouth and reuse intentions (Chen et al., 2022). Guest trust is therefore expected to increase when sanitation standards are disclosed transparently.

H1: Sanitation standard transparency on social media has a positive effect on guest trust.

Sanitation Transparency and Hotel Image

Transparency is also an antecedent of corporate reputation in the hotel industry (Kim & Kim, 2017). Visible commitment to health and safety has become part of how the public evaluates a hotel brand after the pandemic (Sun et al., 2023). Social media activity also shapes how guests perceive a hotel's brand image, as social commerce on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram has been shown to enhance hotel brand image and,

through it, the booking intentions of potential guests (Mohammad et al., 2024). Hotels that openly share their sanitation standards are likely to be perceived as more professional, modern, and prestigious.

H2: Sanitation standard transparency on social media has a positive effect on hotel image.

Sanitation Transparency and Customer Satisfaction

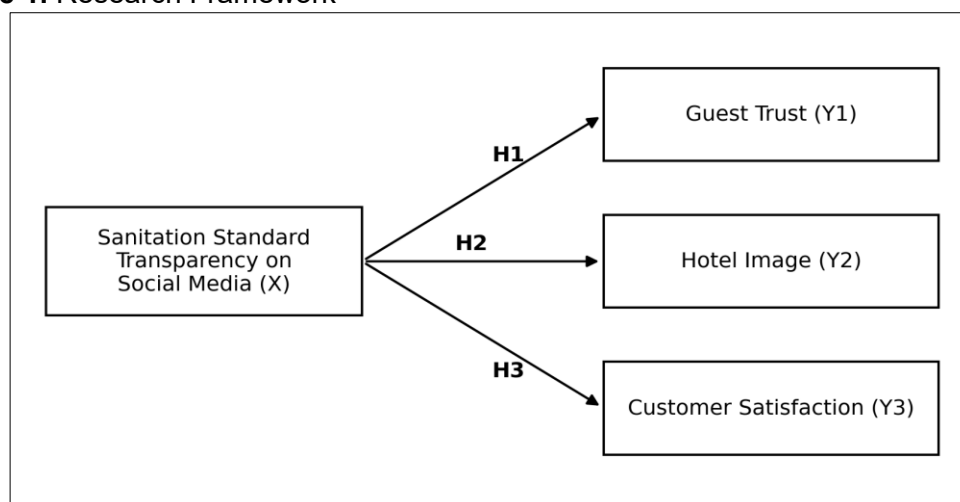
Satisfaction depends on whether the stay confirms what guests expected (Maheswari et al., 2025). Transparent communication of housekeeping and hygiene standards on social media helps align guest expectations with actual operational practices, and hygiene is a major predictor of satisfaction in hotel consumption (Sun et al., 2023). Satisfaction is also understood as the overall evaluation of whether a service meets or exceeds expectations (Kee et al., 2026), and it has been examined as an outcome of service and platform attributes in several Asian retail and online service settings (Gan et al., 2024; Kee et al., 2022). Sanitation transparency is therefore expected to increase customer satisfaction.

H3: Sanitation standard transparency on social media has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

The study framework model is depicted in Figure 1. Sanitation standard transparency (X) represents the operational signal, while guest trust (Y1), hotel image (Y2), and customer satisfaction (Y3) represent the psychological and behavioral responses of the receiver.

Figure 1. Research Framework



RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach and Design

This research employs an associative descriptive quantitative approach to test hypotheses and examine the predictive relationships between digital sanitation transparency and customer perceptions (Sugiyono, 2019). The aim is to determine the magnitude and statistical significance of the influence of the independent variable, Sanitation Standard Transparency (X), on three dependent variables: Guest Trust (Y1), Hotel Image (Y2), and Customer Satisfaction (Y3). The model was formulated in line with Signaling Theory, in which X represents the operational signal and Y1, Y2, and Y3 represent the receiver's psychological and behavioral responses.

The study uses a cross-sectional survey design in which all variables were measured once, at a single point in time, through the same questionnaire. The terms “effect” and “influence” are therefore used in the statistical sense of a regression coefficient that expresses how well sanitation transparency predicts each outcome. Because the sample was drawn through non-probability purposive sampling and no variable was manipulated, the results are interpreted as evidence of association that is consistent with the theoretical argument rather than as proof of causation. A similar cross-sectional online survey design has been used in recent hospitality and tourism research (Kee et al., 2026).

Sampling

The target population comprises guests or prospective guests of star-rated hotels in Tasikmalaya City who are active social media users and use digital channels to gather information about accommodation. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used so that respondents had sufficient knowledge and experience relevant to the study (Sugiyono, 2019). As a non-probability method, purposive sampling does not give every member of the population a known chance of selection and is subject to selection bias, so the findings describe the sampled respondents and cannot be statistically generalized to all hotel guests (Stratton, 2021). Respondents had to be at least 18 years old, had to have viewed or interacted with social media content (such as on Instagram or Facebook) about the sanitation and hygiene standards of hotels, and had to intend to stay, or have previously stayed, in a star-rated hotel in Tasikmalaya City. The study covers eight star-rated hotels in the city: Hotel Santika, Hotel Ramayana, Hotel Horison, Hotel Harmoni, City Hotel, Aston Inn Tasikmalaya, Cordela Suites Tasikmalaya, and Grand Metro Hotel Tasikmalaya.

The sample size was determined with the Slovin formula, $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, using a tolerance for error (e) of 10%, which is widely accepted for descriptive-associative studies in social sciences and business research (Sugiyono, 2019). Because no sampling frame listing guests or prospective guests who follow hotel social media in Tasikmalaya City was available, the exact population size (N) is unknown and was treated as very large. When N is very large, the term $N(e)^2$ dominates the denominator, so the formula approaches $1/e^2$, and yields a minimum of 100 respondents at $e = 0.10$. The minimum of 100 respondents was therefore the basis for the target sample, and a total of 100 completed and valid questionnaires were collected from qualified respondents. This final sample equals the minimum threshold. Because the threshold derives from an unknown rather than a known population count, the findings should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive.

The sample includes both guests who had stayed in a star-rated hotel in Tasikmalaya City and prospective guests who intended to stay. This inclusion is consistent with the study's focus on how guests and prospective guests respond to the sanitation information that hotels publish on social media. Because the Customer Satisfaction construct could otherwise be read as being defined only from an actual stay, it is operationalized here as respondents' satisfaction with the hygiene and safety assurance that hotels communicate on social media, which both groups can evaluate from the content they have viewed. For prospective guests, this construct therefore reflects anticipated satisfaction, whereas for former guests it may also reflect their own stay experience. The screening question accepted either a prior stay or an intention to stay and did not record the two groups separately, so the analysis does not compare them. The eligibility criteria applied during respondent screening are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents Eligibility Screening (N = 100)

Screening Criterion	Eligibility Requirement	Respondents Meeting the Criterion
Age	18 years or older	100%
Exposure to sanitation content	Had viewed or interacted with social media content about the sanitation and hygiene standards of hotels	100%
Stay experience or intention	Had stayed in, or intended to stay in, a star-rated hotel in Tasikmalaya City	100%

Note: Respondents who did not answer “Yes” to all three screening questions could not proceed to the questionnaire.

Measurement

Sanitation Standard Transparency (X) is the extent to which a hotel openly, reliably, and comprehensibly discloses its sanitation protocols, chemical standards, housekeeping schedules, and health certifications on social media (Kim & Kim, 2017). It was measured with three adapted items (X1.1 to X1.3) assessing the clarity, visual verifiability, and completeness of the information. Guest Trust (Y1) was measured with the eight-item EWTs developed by Weitzl (2017). The items (Y1.1 to Y1.8) cover ability, which is the hotel’s technical capacity to maintain hygiene; integrity, which is the honesty and consistency of its claims; and benevolence, which is its concern for the health of guests.

Hotel Image (Y2) is the overall cognitive and emotional perception of the hotel brand held by the public (Kim & Kim, 2017). It was measured with three items (Y2.1 to Y2.3) on brand prestige, modern hygiene identity, and overall attractiveness. Customer Satisfaction (Y3) is the overall evaluation of stay comfort and the confirmation of guest expectations regarding hygiene safety (Maheswari et al., 2025). It was measured with two items (Y3.1 and Y3.2) on the feeling of safety and the realization of clean accommodation expectations. All variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Collection

Primary data were gathered with a structured online questionnaire created in Google Forms and distributed through social media and messaging platforms (WhatsApp) over a twenty-day period. The form opened with three screening questions on age, exposure to hotel sanitation content on social media, and stay experience or intention, and only respondents who answered “Yes” to all three questions could proceed to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was first tested on 30 initial respondents, and the final validation was then performed on the full dataset of 100 respondents. The 30 preliminary respondents were part of the final dataset of 100 responses and were not excluded from the analysis. They were used for the initial trial of the questionnaire, and their responses were then retained together with those of the remaining respondents, so the validity and reliability results reported below are based on the complete dataset. Because all variables were self-reported through a single questionnaire at one point in time, the data may be affected by common method bias (Kock et al., 2021), which is acknowledged as a limitation.

Data Analysis

The data were processed with IBM SPSS Statistics 26 in three sequential stages: instrument quality testing, classical assumption testing, and linear regression with hypothesis testing. Instrument validity was evaluated with the Pearson product-moment correlation, and an item was considered valid if its calculated *r* exceeded the *r* table value of 0.30. Reliability was assessed with Cronbach’s Alpha, using a threshold of 0.70 for internal consistency (Ghozali, 2021).

Classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure that the regression models produce Best Linear Unbiased Estimates (BLUE). These comprised the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test using the exact method, where residuals are normally distributed if $p > 0.05$; the multicollinearity test using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), where $VIF < 10.0$ indicates the absence of collinearity; and the Glejser heteroskedasticity test, where $p > 0.05$ indicates homoskedasticity (Ghozali, 2021). Finally, simple linear regression was run on three separate equations (X to Y1, X to Y2, and X to Y3) to evaluate the slope, direction, and explanatory power (R^2) of the independent variable, accompanied by t-tests for partial significance and F-tests for simultaneous significance to test the hypotheses. Significance values displayed as 0.000 by the software are reported in this article as $p < 0.001$.

RESULTS

This section reports the evaluation of instrument quality, the verification of classical regression assumptions, and the hypothesis testing and regression models.

Instrument Validity

To ensure that the instruments were accurate, each item's Pearson correlation coefficient (calculated r) was compared with the r table value of 0.30. An item is valid if the calculated r is larger than 0.30. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Instrument Validity Testing (N = 100)

Variable	Item	Calculated r	r table	Result
Sanitation Standard Transparency (X)	X1.1	0.665	0.30	Valid
	X1.2	0.711	0.30	Valid
	X1.3	0.645	0.30	Valid
Guest Trust (Y1)	Y1.1	0.646	0.30	Valid
	Y1.2	0.720	0.30	Valid
	Y1.3	0.716	0.30	Valid
	Y1.4	0.662	0.30	Valid
	Y1.5	0.719	0.30	Valid
	Y1.6	0.699	0.30	Valid
	Y1.7	0.671	0.30	Valid
	Y1.8	0.686	0.30	Valid
Hotel Image (Y2)	Y2.1	0.676	0.30	Valid
	Y2.2	0.705	0.30	Valid
	Y2.3	0.700	0.30	Valid
Customer Satisfaction (Y3)	Y3.1	0.548	0.30	Valid
	Y3.2	0.548	0.30	Valid

Note: An item is valid if the calculated $r > r$ table.

According to the data in Table 2, all 16 items measuring the four variables have calculated r values that clearly exceed the minimum threshold of 0.30. For Sanitation Standard Transparency (X), the values range from 0.645 to 0.711, with item X1.2 (visual completeness) showing the highest correlation. For Guest Trust (Y1), the coefficients range from 0.646 (item Y1.1, technical ability) to 0.720 (item Y1.2, integrity of claims), which indicates a coherent measurement of guest trust. For Hotel Image (Y2), the coefficients range from 0.676 to 0.705, with item Y2.2 (modern hygiene identity) the highest. The two Customer Satisfaction (Y3) items both reach 0.548, well above the threshold. All items were therefore retained for further analysis.

Instrument Reliability

Reliability was evaluated through the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of each construct, where a value above 0.70 signifies satisfactory reliability. The results are consolidated in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Construct Reliability Testing (N = 100)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Status
Sanitation Standard Transparency (X)	0.819	Highly reliable
Guest Trust (Y1)	0.902	Excellent reliability
Hotel Image (Y2)	0.833	Highly reliable
Customer Satisfaction (Y3)	0.708	Satisfactory reliability

Note: Threshold for acceptable reliability: Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70.

As shown in Table 3, all four constructs have Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above the 0.70 threshold. Guest Trust (Y1), which uses the multi-dimensional EWTs, has the highest coefficient at 0.902, showing that its items are highly cohesive and stable. Sanitation Standard Transparency (X) and Hotel Image (Y2) also show strong internal consistency at 0.819 and 0.833, respectively. Customer Satisfaction (Y3) has the lowest coefficient at 0.708, but it still passes the benchmark. The instruments are therefore both valid and reliable, which provides a sound basis for regression analysis.

Classical Assumption Tests

To ensure that the estimated coefficients are unbiased, efficient, and consistent, three classical assumption tests were conducted. Normality was assessed with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (exact significance, 2-tailed), multicollinearity with the VIF, and heteroskedasticity with the Glejser test. The results are compiled in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Classical Assumption Tests (N = 100)

Regression Model	Normality (Exact Sig.)	Multicollinearity (VIF)	Heteroskedasticity (Glejser Sig.)
X to Guest Trust (Y1)	0.268	1.000	0.937
X to Hotel Image (Y2)	0.487	1.000	0.289
X to Customer Satisfaction (Y3)	0.260	1.000	0.541

Note: VIF = Variance Inflation Factor. The assumptions are met if $p > 0.05$ (normality and heteroskedasticity) and $VIF < 10.0$.

Table 4 shows that all three regression models satisfy the classical assumptions. The normality test yields exact significance values of 0.268, 0.487, and 0.260 for the residuals of the three models. Because all values exceed 0.05, the residuals are normally distributed, which supports the validity of the t-tests and F-tests. The VIF is 1.000 in each model, far below the threshold of 10.0. Each model contains a single predictor, so multicollinearity is naturally avoided, although reporting the VIF confirms the structural integrity of each pathway. The Glejser test produces non-significant values of 0.937, 0.289, and 0.541, so heteroskedasticity is not present, and the residual variance is constant across levels of X. The ordinary least squares estimates are therefore BLUE.

Hypothesis Testing and Regression Models

Simple linear regression was run independently for each dependent construct. The F-test evaluated the overall significance of each model, the t-test evaluated the significance and direction of the slope, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) assessed explanatory power. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing Results (N = 100)

Hypothesis & Model Pathway		Constant	b	t value	F value	Sig.	R ²	Decision
H1	X to Trust (Y1)	0.963	0.755	18.312	335.319	< 0.001	0.751 (75.1%)	Supported
H2	X to Image (Y2)	1.108	0.728	12.308	151.497	< 0.001	0.577 (57.7%)	Supported
H3	X to Satisfaction (Y3)	0.601	0.859	15.131	228.961	< 0.001	0.673 (67.3%)	Supported

Note: b = unstandardized regression coefficient. Critical t = 1.98 and critical F = 3.926.

The results in Table 5 show that Sanitation Standard Transparency (X) has a significant positive effect on all three customer perception variables. In each model, the calculated F is much larger than the critical F of 3.926, with a significance value of $p < 0.001$. Sanitation Standard Transparency is therefore a statistically significant predictor of guest trust, hotel image, and customer satisfaction. Table 5 aligns each regression result with its hypothesis and decision, and all three hypotheses are supported.

For the Guest Trust model (X to Y1), the constant is 0.963, and the regression coefficient is 0.755, which gives the equation $Y1 = 0.963 + 0.755X$. The calculated t of 18.312 is far above the critical t of 1.98, with $p < 0.001$. Each one-unit increase in digital transparency is thus associated with a 0.755-unit increase in guest trust, holding other factors constant. The R² of 0.751 indicates that transparency explains 75.1% of the variance in guest trust, and the remaining 24.9% is explained by factors outside the model. H1 is supported.

For the Hotel Image model (X to Y2), the constant is 1.108, and the coefficient is 0.728, which gives $Y2 = 1.108 + 0.728X$. The calculated t of 12.308 exceeds the critical t of 1.98, with $p < 0.001$, so each one-unit increase in digital transparency is associated with a 0.728-unit increase in hotel image. The R² of 0.577 shows that transparency explains 57.7% of the variance in hotel image, and 42.3% is explained by other factors. H2 is supported.

For the Customer Satisfaction model (X to Y3), the constant is 0.601, and the coefficient is 0.859, which gives $Y3 = 0.601 + 0.859X$. The calculated t of 15.131 exceeds the critical t of 1.98, with a significance of 0.013 for the constant and < 0.001 for the slope. Each one-unit increase in digital transparency is associated with a 0.859-unit increase in customer satisfaction. The R² of 0.673 shows that transparency explains 67.3% of the variance in customer satisfaction, and 32.7% is explained by other factors. H3 is supported.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze the influence of hotel sanitation standard transparency on social media on guest trust, hotel image, and customer satisfaction in Tasikmalaya City. The results support Signaling Theory by showing that the transparent communication of sanitation standards on social media serves as an effective quality signal (Connelly et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2023). In an information-asymmetric service market such as Tasikmalaya, potential guests cannot evaluate hotel hygiene before booking, so transparent digital disclosure works as an essential cue of operational quality. This transparency helps reduce consumer skepticism about unverified hygiene claims, which supports trust and a positive corporate image. All three hypotheses were supported, and the discussion below follows the order of H1 to H3. Because the design is cross-sectional and the sample was purposive, the findings are interpreted as consistent associations rather than as proof of causation.

The Influence of Sanitation Transparency on Guest Trust (H1)

H1 was supported: guests and prospective guests who perceived the sanitation standards of hotels as more transparent on social media also expressed higher trust in those hotels, and trust showed the strongest association with transparency among the three outcomes. This is consistent with Signaling Theory, in which a signal reduces information asymmetry when the receiver can judge its credibility (Connelly et al., 2011). By openly sharing sanitation procedures, chemical standards, housekeeping schedules, and health certifications, hotels give guests cognitive evidence about their ability, integrity, and benevolence, the dimensions that structure the Electronic Word of Mouth Trust Scale (Weitzl, 2017). The finding agrees with evidence that the way hygiene information is expressed online shapes customers' institutional and cognitive trust in tourist accommodation (Zhang et al., 2026) and that different forms of cleanliness information, such as sanitation labels and cleaning protocols, strengthen guests' trust and behavioral intentions (Godovykh et al., 2023). It also supports the view that transparency is a direct precursor of brand trust (Kim & Kim, 2017). Trust matters because it is a gateway to later behavior, such as word-of-mouth and reuse intentions in hotels (Chen et al., 2022), and the present result suggests that this trust can begin to form before a stay, from information alone.

The Influence of Sanitation Transparency on Hotel Image (H2)

H2 was supported: transparent sanitation information on social media was associated with a more favorable hotel image, although this association was the weakest of the three. This pattern is conceptually expected because corporate reputation is a complex, long-term construct that also depends on service quality, historical brand prestige, pricing, and online guest reviews (Kim & Kim, 2017). From the perspective of Signaling Theory, a visible commitment to hygiene is one of several signals that guests combine when they form an image, which explains why sanitation transparency alone accounts for a substantial but incomplete share of the variation in hotel image. The result aligns with studies showing that social media activity strengthens hotel brand image and, through it, booking intentions (Mohammad et al., 2024), and with evidence that in the post-pandemic landscape a hotel's digital reputation is closely tied to its visible commitment to health and safety (Sun et al., 2023). The finding also fits recent evidence that digital signaling helps build resilient booking intentions during periods of uncertainty (Gishen & Yin, 2026).

The Influence of Sanitation Transparency on Customer Satisfaction (H3)

H3 was supported: guests and prospective guests who saw sanitation standards communicated transparently reported higher satisfaction with the hygiene and safety assurance that hotels convey. Satisfaction depends on whether expectations are met, and transparent communication of housekeeping standards on social media helps align guest expectations with actual operational practices, which leads to a more satisfactory stay (Maheswari et al., 2025). The finding also fits the evidence that hygiene is a major predictor of hotel consumption outcomes (Sun et al., 2023). Other operational elements, such as room size, amenities, or staff friendliness, also influence overall satisfaction, so sanitation transparency should be seen as one important driver rather than the only one.

Related studies in online service and business settings offer a useful contrast: perceived trust shaped the customer experience but did not directly predict satisfaction (Kee et al., 2026), while pandemic-related business adaptations did not necessarily lead to higher customer satisfaction (Lew et al., 2024). In the present study, by contrast, transparency was directly related to satisfaction, probably because the satisfaction items concern the health assurance that hotels communicate, so the signal and the object of evaluation coincide. Interpreted through Signaling Theory, a credible signal about hygiene can be evaluated by the receiver immediately, even before consumption.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Theoretically, the results extend Signaling Theory to sanitation communication in the hospitality sector and suggest that future research should continue to explore digital signaling frameworks. The sender–signal–receiver structure of Signaling Theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Gishen & Yin, 2026) proved useful for organizing the three outcomes as receiver responses, and the consistent positive pattern suggests that sanitation transparency can be treated as an observable quality signal that complements other signals, such as price. Scholars may investigate whether guest trust and hotel image mediate the relationship between sanitation transparency and customer satisfaction, and may examine moderating variables such as hotel category (star-rated versus non-star) or social media platform type.

Managerially, hotel managers should integrate digital transparency into their core marketing and communication strategies. Rather than treating sanitation solely as an internal operational task, hotels should showcase their hygiene practices on social media by sharing behind-the-scenes visuals of housekeeping routines, posting cleanliness certifications, and detailing chemical safety procedures on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. In Tasikmalaya, where regional hotels compete with larger brands, such signaling is a viable way to build digital trust and long-term competitive advantage rather than relying solely on pricing strategies.

From a policy perspective, the Tasikmalaya City Tourism Office (Dinas Pariwisata Kota Tasikmalaya) could establish standardized guidelines for digital sanitation communication, for example, a regional digital hygiene certificate or a centralized transparency platform, to help local hotels communicate their standards and restore traveler confidence. Managers should also keep the signal credible by posting verifiable evidence, such as dated cleaning records, certifications, and staff training, and by updating it regularly, because a signal that cannot be verified may increase skepticism rather than reduce it. Such guidelines could likewise require that disclosed information be verifiable, for example by linking posts to inspection results, so that the signal remains credible across hotels.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that hotel sanitation standard transparency on social media has a positive and statistically significant effect on guest trust, hotel image, and customer satisfaction in Tasikmalaya City, and all three hypotheses are supported. The effect is strongest for guest trust, followed by customer satisfaction and hotel image. In the post-pandemic hospitality industry, transparent digital communication of hygiene standards is therefore an essential signaling mechanism that reduces skepticism and builds trust, brand prestige, and satisfaction.

Hotels are advised to communicate their sanitation practices openly and verifiably on social media as part of their core communication strategy, and local tourism authorities are encouraged to provide standardized guidelines for digital hygiene communication. Future studies should add other digital signaling factors, such as social media responsiveness, user-generated content, and online review ratings, and test mediating and moderating mechanisms in a wider range of destinations.

LIMITATION

This study has two main limitations. First, the sample is limited to 100 respondents in Tasikmalaya City, collected through purposive sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regional markets. Future research should enlarge

the sample and include several municipalities to validate the robustness of the regression models. Second, the study relies on a single predictor, sanitation standard transparency. Future models should incorporate other digital signaling factors, such as social media responsiveness, user-generated content, and online review ratings, to give a more comprehensive evaluation of digital reputation dynamics.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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