

- Internet / Mass media/ Social networking

## The media can propel energy transition

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In our life today, the media play a huge role in public policy making. The media's ability to influence is affected by several factors, such as accessibility, trust and the existing linkage between them and the authorities.

The media's influence is evident in the government's campaign to build public awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The media have helped share facts and educate the public about what we should do to keep ourselves and others safe.

The role of the media could be capitalized on in other matters, such as in accelerating the energy transition, especially when public awareness of it is not evenly spread across the world.

The hype of energy transition is happening not only because the impact of climate change is already here, but also the size of the audience and available media channels are simply enormous.

The deepening of internet penetration and innovation in the creative industry has prompted more people to access more information about energy security, affordability and sustainability.

In 2020, internet penetration in Southeast Asia reached 69 percent, with more than 85 percent of the populations of Brunei Darussalam and Singapore having internet access.

Connectivity is key to obtaining information that people need. A survey showed that 63 percent of respondents used the internet to get news and information in 2020 globally. A similar result is observed in ASEAN member states. Take for instance Indonesia, in early 2020, 12 out of 20 most visited sites on the internet were news platforms. Meaning that people are using the internet to access media and information locally and internationally.

What does all the data mean for the effort to build a better understanding of energy transition? The question is already answered by the nature of the media: channeling and verifying what has happened, and notifying what might happen in the future.

Media reports on topics such as climate-related disasters or the global temperature rise, which could reach 5 degrees Celsius by 2100, have made more people aware of the problems. Building awareness and changing the behavior of global citizens are difficult tasks for governments, and therefore the media could help.

High internet and social media penetration means media could reach a wider audience in an instant. News from across the world about new technologies in sustainable energy and policies applied in certain countries could precipitate the public awareness about energy transition. When the level of understanding is met, people and decision-makers will more likely take action through various channels as in the case of Greta's effect.

Industries are the frontline of this transition process, which requires interdisciplinary knowledge and support from other sectors, including the media. As one of the references for decision-

making among businesses, media play a pivotal role in helping corporations gather information about market situations, government regulations, Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) investment opportunities, emerging technologies and digitalization. Business-oriented media could help explain and facilitate future market prediction, as well as suggestions to the industries.

According to Green Investment Opportunities in Emerging Market 2030 launched by the International Finance Corporation, ASEAN as a region holds key significance in energy transition and transition finance with US\$1.14 trillion investment opportunities just for Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam alone. The chance for the ASEAN members to move toward cleaner, more sustainable and efficient energy will depend on industries' ability to adapt and innovate.

To help businesses adapt to this new opportunity, they need guidance, such as other industries' experiences, clear government strategies and efficient finance. Media as a source of information and public discussions could help fill the information gap. The media's collaboration with governments and financial institutions through forums and private discussions on the matter of energy transition regulation will help industries to accelerate innovation in decarbonizing society. The necessity to lower carbon emissions has caught attention in countries such as the United Kingdom, Japan and China, which pledged to become a carbon-neutral country by 2060.

ASEAN has also developed comprehensive pathways toward energy transition through the ASEAN Plan on Action of Energy Cooperation Phase-II. The plan aims to realize a 23 percent renewable energy share in the total primary energy supply, and a 32 percent energy intensity reduction from the 2005 level by 2025.

While the spirit to speed up energy transition has arrived, the actual realization surely will face problems along the way, especially in the ASEAN member states where fossil fuels remain the major sources of energy and the industries' capabilities vary. It is necessary for the media to provide information on how industrialized countries implement their policies on the transitions, and the benefits of those policies.

When people have access to education about the long-term benefit of the energy transition, they would likely support the process in various ways, from buying more energy-efficient products to purchasing stocks of more publicly listed green companies.

Tesla and several solar energy stocks on Wall Street offer examples of public and investor participation being linked to ESG finance. In 2020, Tesla sold about 500,000 electric vehicles, and its stocks have risen 3600 percent since launching in 2010, even amid the pandemic. Meanwhile, the solar energy stocks index soared 233.95 percent in 2020.

The media, with its penetration and multiplatform power, can spread information faster and further than before. They also help governments, financial institutions, industries and academics to form comprehensive consensus through various discussions, data analysis and forums. With all those efforts, the media participate in propelling energy transition and ensuring a better future for all.