



DIGeCONOMY 2022 pushes customer-first agenda to bolster PH digital economic growth

Major industry players share key customer-centric operational insights in Ninja Van Philippines' first-ever digital economy summit

11 February 2022, MANILA, Philippines – Despite operational challenges, strict lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened the Philippines' digital economy performance in the past year. According to the [e-Conomy SEA 2021 Report](#), the country is expected to have a 93% year-on-year surge in gross merchandise volume (GMV).

Capitalizing on a strong local digital economy, tech-enabled express logistics company [Ninja Van Philippines](#) pushed for a customer-first agenda to support the growth and recovery of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in its first-ever digital summit, DIGeCONOMY 2022.

“As the needs of SMEs continue to evolve, we, along with other players in the digital ecosystem, need to evolve alongside them. To do this, a customer-centric approach must be employed to be attuned to the changes in the landscape and consumer behavior, and assess how these can affect SMEs,” Ninja Van Philippines Country Head Martin Cu said.

The recently held event aims to plant the seeds in cultivating a community of e-commerce movers and shakers. Key speakers from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Go Negosyo, and GCash discuss operationalizing customer-focused services for SMEs and their customers.

Arming SMEs with digital know-how and accessibility

The same report showed that while the Philippines gained 12 million new digital users, the country has the lowest internet users transacting online in the region at only 68%.

To raise internet penetration and usage of digital services, both the private and public sectors have made great strides in allowing better digitization and opportunities for Filipinos through capacity-building efforts and internet accessibility.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) vowed to continue pursuing its mandate to promote SME growth through capacity building efforts and information dissemination. “We are still on the path towards economic recovery, and our MSMEs need all the assistance they can get to pivot in the new normal,” DTI Undersecretary Blesila Lantayona shared.

Since the pandemic started, Lantayona shared that the DTI has conducted over 200 sessions attended by over 42,000 participants under its Jobs Training Pathway where participants learn more about e-commerce, e-payment, and digital marketing. It has also opened the Negosyo Center portal that aims to support digital transition among entrepreneurs.



GoNegosyo Executive Director Thermina Akram shared that their main focus in their capacity building efforts is to educate the SME network and encourage a change in mindset to embrace digital practices. “The pandemic gave us a picture of the level of readiness in the Philippines. There is no other time to transition but now,” Akram stressed.

“A healthy and vibrant ICT ecosystem creates a level-playing field for businesses, and gives consumers choices and quality service,” Advocacy group Democracy.net.ph Co-Founder and Co-Convenor Engineer Pierre Tito Galla emphasized. Promoting ICT rights, governance, development, and security, Democracy.net.ph pushes for legislative solutions such as the Open Access in Data Transmission Act, which further opens the country’s digital market and grows its ICT ecosystem; the Rural Wired Connectivity Development Act, which augments wired services, particularly in the rural last mile; and the Spectrum Management Act, which encourages growth of wireless services.

Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Assistant Secretary Alvin Navarro disclosed that talent development, digital infrastructure, and information security risks are the agency’s top priorities to push for digital transformation.

Customer-first mindset

The report also revealed that the majority of surveyed digital consumers use digital services because of convenience. SMEs need to adopt an ecosystem that enhances the convenience of transacting with them by partnering with companies that anticipate and adjust to business needs.

“With the majority of the businesses under the SME category, we are on a mission to supercharging SME growth by building hyper-awareness to customer trends and needs,” Ninja Van Philippines Chief Commercial Officer Sabina Lopez-Vergara shared. The logistics company has organized capacity-building efforts for SMEs as well as continuously cultivated relationships with communities and formed valuable partnerships with key stakeholders to provide support in digital transition and adoption.

Among its capacity-building efforts are the blog.ninjavaan.co, a free business resource center that provides actionable content ranging from bite-sized tips to in-depth business insights for aspiring and established entrepreneurs; and the [Ninja Van Masterclass](#), a series of webinars that provides lessons on how to shape and improve brands to increase sales.

To increase connectivity and strengthen presence through relationship-building, the company engages with regional and provincial partners through the Ninja Van Caravan, which currently targets key areas in Bicol Region, Central Luzon, South Luzon, and the Ilocos Region. Ninja Van also has conducted roadshows with key shippers from different provinces and educated them about pricing benefits. Just recently, the company expanded in Cebu after Typhoon Odette affected the livelihoods of residents to help businesses recover.



The DTI-Philippine Trade and Training Center (DTI-PTTC) acknowledged the need for the organization to adapt to stay relevant to local businesses. “If we want to be relevant, our customers have to be persistent and continue to demand our products,” DTI-PTTC Executive Director Nelly Dillera shared. To achieve this, the organization continues to listen to the needs of SMEs and align their capacity building programs to address challenges.

In the financial technology sector, Mynt-GCash Chief Customer Officer Winsley Bangit shared the company’s enthusiasm in understanding the Filipino consumer. “We are always grounded on improving their everyday lives. In GCash, it means we need to be very agile and very responsive,” Bangit quipped.

GCash currently has more than a whopping 50 million users, and to further enhance customer experience, the company studies consumer pain points and solves them through simple solutions with fail-safe products like the creation of personal QR codes and GCash Padala, which allows users to send money to non-GCash users.

Ninja Van Philippines Chief Operating Officer Vin Perez added that Ninja Van has also amplified customer experience further with its Hassle-free Service Resolution where shippers can resolve parcel issues faster and with ease. The company has put multiple touchpoints for shippers; increased its response time to just within 24 hours and resolution of non-delivery issues such as refund, damaged items, and pick-ups within 72 hours; and set up an email status notifications to notify shippers of every step of the escalation and resolution process.

Perez noted that continuous collaboration between the private and public sectors can further augment growth as the continuous enhancement of customer experience entails building an ecosystem that enables easier access to quality services.

“Customer-centricity needs to be front and center now as we grow the digital economy. In order to build trust, we have to be able to resolve the concerns of our consumers. Making them happy and trusting is a big part of how we can drive forward this digital ecosystem,” Perez concluded.

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