

“Radiating positivity, creating connectivity”

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## SMORGASBORD

# CERTIFIED LOKALISTA ATTRACTS ENTREPRENEURS NATIONWIDE

By: ELIAS O. BAQUERO

COURIER service J&T Express Philippines, known for efficiently delivering parcels even to far-flung and hard-to-reach locations in the country, showcased its Certified Lokalista Campaign.

In a webinar last November 11, 2020, J&T Express Philippines announced that the Certified Lokalista campaign has started last October 16, 2020 and will run up to January 14, 2021.

It encourages people to buy local, patronize and support small-to-medium-sized entrepreneurs, and thus promote regional products to a larger national audience.

J&T's Certified Lokalista campaign has attracted entrepreneurs from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, many of whom promote and distribute their wares in other regions for the very first time.

Executive Director-OIC Nelly T. Dillera of the Department of Trade and Industry's Philippine Trade Training Center (DTI-PTTC) pointed out one distinct factor that set this new e-commerce explosion apart from similar trends.

“Culture is the basis of how we can and should develop products, from food to wearables. What is important is preserving them while adapting to the new global economy. E-logistics has made

it possible for local products and crafts to be brought to the homes of the people,” Dillera said.

Dillera said that with 75,000 online entrepreneurs now active on digital marketplaces, DTI itself, which is focused on exports, “did a backward integration on helping people to start their own business and onboard e-commerce.

DTI-PTTC provides training to these new entrepreneurs in vital areas like digitization of their processes; business finance and operations; business marketing; business human resources and organization; and working in logistics and supply chain.

J&T Express Philippines Vice President Zoe Chi said the Certified Lokalista campaign celebrates the hard work, creativity, and nationalism of online sellers.

“Filipino entrepreneurs, especially those who went above and beyond amid the mobility restrictions brought about by the pandemic, deserve to be supported and recognized for their creativity and tenacity,” Chi said.

Panel moderator Amor Maclang of Geiser Maclang Communications Inc. said the increasingly popular digital products had double-day sales. It was launched on the

same day of the same month by different online marketplaces. The campaign can be a long-overdue opportunity where shoppers can support regional entrepreneurs.

“It is because of these men and women that our local products are finally getting the recognition they deserve! Generations-old family recipes, regional specialties, and other proudly Filipino wares are becoming stars on these e-commerce platforms,” Maclang said.

The Certified Lokalista campaign kickstarted in 2020 by awarding Filipino entrepreneurs with a Certified Lokalista badge recognizing them as J&T trusted sellers.

The inspiring work of Certified Lokalistas has paved the way to promote Filipino goods and were awarded P20,000 worth of free shipping by J&T Express.

Chi described how the challenges brought about by the coronavirus crisis and its lockdowns became instead an opportunity for businesses to discover the advantages of e-commerce and e-logistics.

“After the pandemic greatly reduced mobility, both old and new entrepreneurs without any previous e-commerce interest or experience joined the platform in droves. It was a matter of survival because

people were staying away from brick-and-mortar stores and were doing a lot of their shopping online. But what these sellers may or may not realize is that by joining e-commerce, they are not just boosting online sales—they are becoming ambassadors of their own heritage,” Chi said.

Four Certified Lokalistas from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao spoke about and showed their own homegrown products and produce which gave their respective regions their unique edge.

Maria Todi, founder of the School of Living Tradition which is based in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, emphasized the intricacy and beauty with which native artisans design and weave T'boli shirts, bracelets, necklaces, and rugs, among other heirlooms.

Todi said that buying from T'boli means “not just helping one weaver or organization but helping a community.”

Meanwhile, Katherine

Jordan, of Leyte-based online food store Mary's Abuyog Special Toskoley Moron, atp., said delicacies like pili nuts, chocolate moron, binagol, sagmani, and suman latik have become popular outside the region.

Rica Dakudao-Buenaflo, who relocated from Davao to Bicol in 2002, founded Que Rica to manufacture, promote, and deliver the latter's best cuisine to other parts of the archipelago. She maintained that Bicol should be known as the “land of Keto” because of its nutritious food:

Finally, Bulacan-based culinary whiz Rheeza Santiago-Hernandez said it is about time that the normally reticent Bulaqueños start promoting the dishes that they are known for. One example is the hamon bulaqueña, which has a rich place in Philippine history.

As celebrity host Robi Domingo put it, the work of these regional entrepreneurs is “making local the new premium.”

