

# Otaku and Japanese Pop Culture

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Q1. ✓ The otaku image has many stereotypical images. They were considered as social rejects in the early 1980's, the downfall of Japanese society itself in the 1990's, but their image changed in the 2000's as they were known as ultra-consumers (Galbraith, 2010, pgs. 210-11). With that in mind, otaku is more than meets the eye.

When one thinks of otaku, some things that come to mind are pacifists, gamers, lovers of anime, collect figurines and dolls of idols and heroes, reluctant to communicate in person with others and so on and so forth (Britton, 2007, p. 13). What made otaku negative was the media discrimination beginning with Akio Nakamori, who called them unsocialized misfits in his article, "Otaku' Research" (Galbraith, 2010, pg. 216). An incident that reinforced this was that of Tsutomu Miyazaki, an otaku by Nakamori's definition, who molested and murdered four girls, ranging from four to seven years old.

✓ Based on these stereotypes presented above, some of it has some truth to it. For example, in Akihabara, there was a situation in which there were some 5,000 local residents and shop owners complained of otaku shoplifting, littering, and other similar types of acts (Galbraith, 2010, pg. 222). In this situation, Takaya Kobayashi makes note that it is not all otaku that are doing this, there are good and bad otaku. In this and many other situations, otaku are being misunderstood as they are thought of being overall a negative aspect of the Japanese pop culture, when in fact, it is the opposite.

✓ Otaku have many roles in Japanese pop culture. One of them, as mention before, is being ultra-consumers. It began in the 1980's, VCR's became more common, which allowed fans to easily help anime spread in being able to record it, share it, collect it, and so on (Galbraith, 2010, pg. 214). With this in mind, Gundam would be a perfect example. Although it did not succeed as a TV series for children, otaku made it successful in purchasing scaled plastic models of it. Be aware that it is estimated that 1.72 million otaku in Japan sent \$3.5 billion on their hobbies annually (Galbraith, 2010, pg. 218). Otaku have also played an important role in helping spread

Japanese pop culture overseas, which caused it to be more tied to the otaku image and it was thought as something positive, not negative as in Japan.

Q2. Akihabara is the world's largest electrical goods shopping district located in the east side of Tokyo, Japan. Tourists from all over the world come to Akihabara to buy electronic goods, see the video game and anime subcultures, female pop idols, and many more things. With that said, Akihabara has a significance in the development of Japanese pop culture in many ways.

Akihabara's development has a lot to do with Japanese pop culture. It started as a gathering place where people could sell electronic components after World War II (Japanology Plus, Akihabara, 2014). It began with radios, then other products/components as well. Akihabara went from being a radio district, to an electric town, and finally to a computer district. Now, there are about 300 electric shops in a 500 sq. meter area in which they do not compete with each other since it has a unique system in how it is set up. There are four categories: mass-market retailers, specialized retailers, part shops, and junk shops. An example of this would be the Radio center that sells individual electronic parts. An effect of all of this, is how stores selling action figures and video games have started to sprung up in Akihabara.

With this in mind, otaku came to be an important aspect of Akihabara. There is the technology, hardware, software, content, and Moe-Kei otaku. As one can see, these types of otaku evolved as Akihabara also evolved. Now there are many other types of otaku, like PC otaku, video and online gaming otaku and many more. This helped Japanese pop culture spread overseas with this unique situation going on in Akihabara and in doing so, brought tourism.

→ The future roles of Akihabara and Japanese pop culture in the global arena are limitless. An invention that is only seen in Akihabara is rental showcases. No one has ever thought of that. This would be an effect that otaku has on Akihabara since mainly action figures are put in display in these see-through boxes. There are also a lot of robots in Akihabara. This would be another think that otaku are interested in, like 3D printing. There is no doubt that Akihabara has

a lot of influence in Japanese pop culture as it is a district that is always evolving according to the years.

Q3. There are many contents of this course that have provided me with new knowledge and interests. One of them would be the otaku image. Before taking this class, I have heard that being an otaku was something negative, but in reality, it was something totally different. Another thing that provided me with new knowledge is ukiyo-e prints. It is interesting how it can take a month to complete and that it can require six to seven wood blocks that are carved on both sides. Last but not least, is the uniforms. It is fascinating how students who are looking for a job wear similar type of clothing to their interviews, even when they are not told to wear anything specific.

- 1 need to be write longer
- 2 ✓
- 3 ✓ ) fine
- 4 could be longer
- 5 ✓

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- Very good essay with lots of interesting analysis
- could be better with more personal views.
- Q3 should be longer