

CSUMB

Akihabara?

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Q1 To understand what the city of Akihabara is, it is very important to understand 2 other key words: Otaku and Youth Culture. Since the foundation of Akihabara, Akihabara was a place for hobbyists to get what they need. In its early history following World War 2, this was radios and radios parts. Akihabara being the place for electronics, when personal computers were developed, Akihabara became the place to buy computers and parts to build and modify them. Akihabara being the place for computers, when games and anime were developed from these computers, Akihabara became the place to buy games and anime character related goods. This evolution of the interests of the hobbyists who form the core of Akihabara has produced a group of people dedicated to their interest. These fanatics, known as otaku, form a crucial element of the city of Akihabara, for they are the ones who frequent the stores of Akihabara buying computer parts to make their computer fractions of a second faster, or they are the ones who amass giant anime figure collections. If these otaku were not spending a considerable amount of their money buying these things, it would be hard to imagine an Akihabara culturally or economically as big as it is currently. Undoubtedly, Akihabara is the capital for anime otaku, being the biggest center for the sale of anime goods. As anime is becoming more and more popular among Japanese youth, not to mention youth the world over, Akihabara is the place to premiere place to buy things to feed this interest in anime. Many of these fans aren't as obsessed as otaku. However, their interest in the anime that they are familiar with leads them to purchase figurines and memorabilia of all things anime. Anime is closely tied with Akihabara, and as Akihabara promotes anime, anime also promotes Akihabara. These cool figurines and anime goods help spread anime to more youth, who are increasingly influenced by anime, who then go

on to buy more things in Akihabara. This places Akihabara on the map, not just among Japanese youth, but with youth around the world.

Q2 By and large people's perspectives of Akihabara are shaped by their perceptions of otaku. Otaku are a varied group of many different circumstances, but the prevailing image is that of a pathetic male who is socially incapable who has replaced social interaction with anime. This image wasn't formed at random, however. Many of the anime goods sold in Akihabara are that of anime girls in various sexually compromising positions. Plastic figures of girls that allow you to see their underwear and pillows with flushed girls in their underwear are all things one can buy, and are quite popular. In addition, there are the popular maid cafes, where the waitresses are dressed as maids and must address the customer as "master" and other weird things like that. Many otaku fit this description and can't be ignored in a discussion about otaku. However, many otaku do not fit this mold, and to say that all otaku are pathetic nerds would be to not understand otaku. Otaku nowadays are men or women who have a deep interest towards anime, and these people often are more than capable of holding high paying jobs and having relationships. These people are also otaku, and they are also the people who make up the anime otaku aspect of akihabara. Other than the more loserish otaku, I don't think there are negative view of Akihabara. Among youth who have an a passing interest in anime, Akihabara is a Mecca for finding cool anime related things. Small statues of badass robots or well made statues of the cool heroines from popular anime can be found here. One can even buy a friend a hug pillow of an anime girl as a joke. Besides the things for anime otaku, Akihabara is a good place to buy electronics. It's rather hard to feel negatives towards electronic appliances, so being a good place for electronics is what I would call a plus. Akihabara is a great place to get things such as

washing machines, stereos, rice cookers, computers and television sets. Being able to find practical goods like electronics help balance its image as a place for otaku. These images, positive and negative, form Akihabara.

Q3 A good commercial for Akihabara for people in the United States would probably require different forms of advertising. For general advertising, it would probably be important to emphasize Akihabara as a city of lights and electronics. Imagery of the Akihabara storefronts would be effective, and I think they would be especially effective at night. Although electronic appliances in themselves are pretty boring, I think if Akihabara is as much of a electronics center as it advertises to be, I think it could be good for advertisements. Advertisements can focus in on electronic appliances with advanced features, such as fancy advanced Japanese toilets.

Showcasing the electronics would also allow Akihabara to showcase their employees who can understand English and help English speaking customers. Another good thing to showcase would probably be the game centers of Akihabara. Game centers are quite fun, and they can be very colorful and bright and flashy, which is good for a commercial. For commercials more targeted towards youth and anime fans, it would be easy to tap into the large otaku culture of Akihabara.

The commercial could feature a lot of footage of the many anime figures available for sale in Akihabara. Although with a commercial aimed towards the United States at wide it would probably be best to briefly pass over if not avoid featuring maid cafes, anime fans might be interested in going to the maid cafes that they have seen show up occasionally in the anime they watch. Most people in the U.S. would probably be weirded out by the maid cafe, but advertising them would probably get the attention of people who would want to try them at least once. Also, it wouldn't be a bad idea to showcase the many games that one can buy in Akihabara. Many of these games can only be found in Japan, and that would be a great thing to advertise.