| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

From Niche to Mainstream: Tracing the Trajectory of Fansubbing in the Arab World

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| **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine the development of the Arab fansubbing phenomenon, focusing on the Arab fansubbers' demographic characteristics, registration patterns, and workflow styles between 2001 and 2023. Furthermore, it strives to comprehend the role of fansubbing in disseminating global content within the Arab world, emphasizing its potential as a means of promoting mutual understanding. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study examines a corpus of 360 Arab fansubbers and their associated metadata primarily sourced from Subscene.com, a popular subtitle-sharing platform. Additionally, it explores digital interactions such as online forums, dialogues, and comment sections. Therefore, the findings indicate a significant increase in registered fansubbers, signaling a growing interest in fansubbing activities within the Arab world. Moreover, there have been noticeable shifts in the distribution of audiovisual fansubbed materials, signifying evolving preferences and practices. Finally, diverse collaborative practices have emerged within these communities, indicating a shift towards a more cooperative working style.

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1. Introduction

This Fansubbing, a practice that combines the words 'fan' and 'subtitling,' refers to the creation of subtitles by fans for their favorite content, such as anime and television series (Diaz-Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006; Duraner et al., 2017; González, 2007). This phenomenon originated in the United States when Japanese anime enthusiasts aimed to maintain the cultural and linguistic aspects lost during dubbing (Dwyer, 2018). However, the internet's emergence in the 2000s greatly impacted the growth and recognition of fansubbing, as it provided cost-free tools, like BT torrents and subtitling software, for processing audio-visual content (Díaz Cintas 2010; Pérez González 2008; Wang and Zhang 2017). Furthermore, the internet created efficient fansubbing networks and online communities, where members assumed roles such as timers, translators, and proofreaders (Diaz-Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006). Today, fansubbers contribute to diverse cultural productions, from Korean television dramas to globally created vlogs (Lee, 2011; Tessa, 2012).

One notable platform in this realm is Subscene.com. Established in 2001, it offers user-generated subtitles for a wide range of audio-visual content, including movies, TV shows, and web series. This website has become a crucial resource for fansubbing communities across the globe, such as the Arab fansubbing community, by providing a central hub for sharing, downloading, and discussing subtitles in multiple languages. Its user-friendly interface, extensive subtitle library, and active community engagement have made Subscene.com popular among fansubbers and audiences looking for accessible, culturally sensitive translations. As a vital part of the fansubbing ecosystem for over two decades, Subscene.com has significantly contributed to circulating global media content, bridging linguistic and cultural divides, and fostering a more inclusive and diverse media landscape.

In the Arab world, fansubbing has emerged as a response to the increasing demand for Arabic-subtitled foreign content, driven by widespread internet adoption and streaming platforms' rapid growth. Platforms like Subscene.com have played a significant role in supporting fansubbing activities and bridging linguistic and cultural divides. This paper examines the history of fansubbing in the Arab world from 2001 to 2023, emphasizing the contributions made by Arab fansubbers on Subscene.com. Furthermore, the study aims to explore subtitling fandoms, fansubbing communities, and collaborative efforts in the Arab region. The research employs a corpus of 360 Arab fansubbers and associated metadata, including their displayed profile names, registration years, and the total number of A.V. materials subtitled.

This study is situated within the broader context of media and cultural studies theories exploring participatory cultures and networked platforms. Specifically, it draws on scholarship examining fan communities as sites of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2012), amateur media production as a form of cultural participation (Burgess & Green, 2018), and the role of online platforms in shaping vernacular creative practices (Gillespie, 2010). By tracing the evolution of Arab fansubbing communities on the Subscene platform, this study aims to elucidate the cultural participation frameworks and platform dynamics underpinning contemporary fan translation practices and transnational media flows. Examining fansubbing through these conceptual lenses provides a foundation for assessing the cultural impact of fan translation activities, the affordances and limitations of subtitle-sharing platforms, and the implications for understanding emergent models of transnational media circulation.

To address the existing gap in the literature, the present study poses the following research questions:

- How has the landscape of Arab fansubbing and its practices transformed over the last two decades?
- What unique insights can be unearthed by studying the fansubbers' profiles on Subscene.com?
- How have the collaborations within Arab fansubbing communities impacted the fansubbing practice in the region?

By investigating these questions, the study aims to shed light on the historical development, underlying dynamics, and practical aspects of Arab fansubbing activities, contributing to a deeper understanding of the fansubbing phenomenon in the Arab world.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Global history of fansubbing
Fansubbing emerged in the 1980s as a grassroots movement responding to the unavailability or untranslatability of A.V. content, especially Japanese anime and US TV shows (Pedersen, 2018). However, Massidda (2020) states that the phenomenon was more pronounced in countries that traditionally relied on dubbing, such as France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Argentina (Orrego-Carmona, 2015), Brazil (Bold, 2012), and the United States (Coates, 2014). These early fansubbers, or "otakus," subtitled their favorite anime shows and distributed them for free via VHS using the Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope (SASE) system (Coates, 2014). Their efforts were crucial in introducing Japanese animation to a broader audience outside Japan (Lee, 2011).

The late 1990s marked a turning point for fansubbing with the advent of high-speed internet access, Open-Source software, digital video formats, and peer-to-peer file-sharing platforms like BitTorrent and Emule (Condry, 2010; Simó & Rosaria, 2005). This digital revolution, known as "digisubs," facilitated easier sharing, collaboration, and distribution of subtitled content, reaching a global audience and contributing to the growing popularity of various media forms (Condry, 2010).

Throughout the second decade of the new millennium, fansubbing experienced a revival, shifting its focus to serialized TV shows (Askwith, 2007). The golden age of US TV shows, such as Lost (2004–2010), marked a significant change in the television landscape, paving the way for video streaming on demand (VoD) and binge-watching culture (Massidda, 2015). Furthermore, the rise of social media and online streaming platforms further accelerated the growth of fansubbing, allowing fans to engage with media content and collaborate on translation projects (Pérez-González, 2012).

In the new millennium's second decade, fansubbing has evolved into community-based groups and online repositories acting as aggregators and conglomerates (Pedersen, 2018). In countries like Argentina, China, and Italy, fansubbing communities are characterized by active participation, specific guidelines, protocols, workflows, and well-defined roles that simulate professional practices (Li, 2015). On the other hand, conglomerates are represented by individuals who gather fansubbed versions of various programs submitted by online users and upload them to website repositories.

Fansubbing thrives in the context of participatory culture, where fan interactions lead to co-creating cultural products (Banks & Deuze, 2009) and are driven by motivation, ultimately shaping the collective identity of fansubbers in digital environments (Li, 2015). As a social activity, fansubbing results in an autoregulated, complex, and adaptive system characterized by hierarchical self-organization, ad hoc norms, and workflow experimentation, arising from the synergy of interacting agents within decentralized, virtual mechanisms such as the internet (Li, 2015).

Despite its unofficial and often legally ambiguous nature, fansubbing has attracted considerable academic attention for its potential to challenge traditional media distribution and consumption models and its implications for studying translation, fandom, and global cultural exchange. As a result, researchers have explored various aspects of fansubbing, such as its impact on the professional audiovisual translation (AVT) industry, the motivations and practices of fansubbers, and the role of technology and innovation in shaping the fansubbing landscape (Lukasz Bogucki, 2009; Díaz Cintas & Anderman, 2008).

2.2. Fansubbing in the Arab World

The dramatic increase in satellite channels in the late 1990s and early 2000s, reaching over 100 non-stop broadcasting channels, prompted a shift in AVT practices (Gamal, 2007). To fill their broadcasting hours, these channels had to resort to foreign programs, boosting AVT as a promising career and creating thematic channels such as the History Channel, Discovery Channel, National Geographic Channel, and Disney Channel, all subtitled into Arabic. Furthermore, modern TV dramas and sports programs were shown on Arab satellite channels subtitled in Arabic.

In the same vein, fansubbing has become an increasingly mainstream practice in the Arab world over the past decade, prompted by the escalating appetite among Arab audiences for accessible translations of foreign film, television, and web-based media content. Several interlinked factors have catalyzed this rising prominence of fansubbing activities and communities across the region – namely, the rapid growth of high-speed internet access, the proliferation of online video streaming platforms like Shahid, Netflix and YouTube, and changing media consumption habits especially among tech-savvy youth.

Estimates indicate internet penetration in the Arab states accelerated from around 3% in 2003 to 64% in 2022, exposing vast new segments of the population to global digital media. The advent of video-on-demand (VoD) services has also provided on-click access to international movies and shows, though often lacking in regional language subtitling or dubbing. This appetite for globally oriented content coupled with accessibility barriers has presented fansubbers an opportunity to fulfill the translation gaps. Linguistic skills, cultural affinities, motivation to facilitate access or share fandoms, and digital means have enabled enthusiasts to form networks that rapidly produce and circulate fan-subtitled versions to fellow Arabic speakers.

Though issues persist around legality, quality control and intellectual property, fansubbing continues to thrive as a conduit bridging foreign media to Arab viewers. As grassroots audiovisual translators, fansubbers display remarkable dedication and alacrity in mediating cultural flows out of personal passion. Their collective efforts promise to significantly reshape media consumption patterns and intercultural connections in the evolving Arab digital landscape.

Fansubbing into Arabic poses unique linguistic and cultural challenges. The Arabic language encompasses numerous dialects and variations across the Middle East/North Africa region, ranging from Egyptian and Levantine to Gulf and Moroccan dialects. Fansubbers must navigate decisions around which Arabic dialect to use in translations based on the target audience. Furthermore, cultural sensitivity issues arise regarding references to politics, religion, gender relations and other taboo topics, which may be acceptable in the original version but controversial or offensive for Arab viewers. Strategies such as using Modern Standard Arabic, adding explanatory footnotes, and modifying potentially objectionable references are commonly adopted by fansubbers to address these complexities.

Arab fansubbers face unique challenges navigating the complexities of the Arabic language, which features numerous dialects and regional variations, as well as cultural sensitivities and taboos in the Arab world (Gamal, 2007). Despite these challenges, they have demonstrated remarkable creativity and resourcefulness in their translation practices, employing strategies to address linguistic and cultural differences, such as using footnotes, glosses, and creative adaptations. Their efforts have contributed to the increasing popularity and accessibility of foreign media in the Arab world, fostering cultural exchange and broadening the horizons of Arab audiences (Sakr, 2013).

The Arab fansubbing community also exhibits a strong sense of collaboration and knowledge sharing, with fansubbers working together on translation projects and supporting each other's endeavors. This collaborative spirit has played a crucial role in developing a vibrant and diverse fansubbing landscape in the Arab world, reflecting the broader trends of globalization and digitalization in media consumption and production.

2.3. Fansubbing fandoms

Existing literature on fansubbing fandom practices primarily frames it within the context of Japan's emergence as a new center of cultural globalization (Iwabuchi, 2002), Western fascination with Japanese culture (Napier, 2007), and Japanese products filling the overseas animation market void (Leonard, 2005). Participatory media fandom, including fansubbing, significantly impacts the flow of cultural commodities, enlarging its volume and diversity, increasing its extent, and accelerating its velocity. However, it also unsettles the mediascape by exceeding the reach of cultural industries' global distribution business, resulting in the unevenness

of cultural globalization (Ku, 2002). This unevenness is attributed to cultural consumers' attainment of technological capacities to reproduce and disseminate cultural commodities globally, challenging the traditional business models of cultural industries (Bustamante, 2004; Fox & Wrenn, 2001).

Fansubbing and related activities fill the access gap and add new layers of free knowledge to the original products, challenging traditional distinctions between production and consumption (Green & Jenkins, 2009). Fansubbing communities play a crucial role in the sustainability and evolution of these practices (Pérez-González, 2012). These communities often emerge organically around shared interests in specific media genres or languages, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among their members (Hills, 2002).

In the Arab world, fansubbing fandoms have grown significantly, driven by the increasing availability of digital platforms and the rising demand for diverse media content. These communities often emphasize collaboration and knowledge sharing, as fansubbers work together in teams or networks, pooling their skills and expertise to produce high-quality translations and address the challenges of linguistic and cultural adaptation (Sakr, 2013). Fansubbers invest considerable time and effort into producing accurate, culturally sensitive translations for their fellow fans, contributing to the overall quality of fansubbed content and fostering a sense of pride and identity among community members.

Despite the informal and legally ambiguous nature of fansubbing, these communities demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability, navigating the challenges of copyright enforcement, technological change, and shifting audience preferences. As fansubbing continues to evolve in response to the broader trends of globalization and digitalization, these communities will play a critical role in shaping the future of AVT and media consumption in the Arab world and beyond. The globalization of media fandom is also driven by consumers' mobilization and coordination of intellectual capacities to mediate foreign cultural text, utilizing their resources and skills to carry out mediated copying and distribution (Banks & Deuze, 2009).

2.4. Collaboration and fansubbing
Collaborative translation, as described by Fan (2020), involves the joint efforts of translators and experts in related fields, with fansubbing being a notable example of such collaboration in the AVT domain. Fansubbing emerged as a response to censorship of Japanese audiovisual products in the US (Massidda, 2015) and continues to grow in popularity in Asia due to its efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Fansubbing communities adopt a decentralized, non-hierarchical structure, where participants specialize in various aspects of the translation process, such as proofreading, post-editing, art effects, and more (Lee, 2011; O'hagan, 2009).

The collaborative workflow in fansubbing groups is highly streamlined, allowing for rapid turnaround times. It typically involves a resource team obtaining the source film and original subtitles, followed by translation editing, proofreading, incorporation of special effects, and finally, precise synchronization of the translated subtitle text with the original film's dialogue and imagery (Fan, 2020). By dividing up responsibilities across these different task areas, fansubbing groups are able to efficiently translate and release new Japanese media content online within a few hours of initial availability (Jiménez-Crespo, 2013).

Despite the legal challenges faced by fansubbing communities due to copyright infringement (Fan, 2020), these groups firmly adhere to and prioritize sharing and open access principles, often releasing their translations online for free under Creative Commons licenses (Simó & Rosaria, 2005). This commitment to universality of access reflects a community-oriented ethos that aims to foster greater intercultural dialogue and promote mutual understanding between fans across linguistic and cultural barriers (Diaz-Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006; Pérez-González, 2014).

Fansubbing exemplifies the deeply collaborative essence of AVT as a domain, with its focus on accessibility, cultural exchange, community dialogue, and collective skill/knowledge development amongst volunteering participants. As fansubbing coalesces into an increasingly mainstream practice going forward, these core principles will likely continue shaping the future of participatory media consumption and production in an ever more interconnected global mediascape (Pérez-González, 2014).

2.5. Technological advancements and fansubbing
Technological advancements have significantly impacted fansubbing practices, transforming how fansubbers create, share, and consume audiovisual content. Digital media platforms and the internet have facilitated the rapid dissemination of content across borders, enabling access to materials from different languages and cultures (Bassnett & Bielsa, 2009; Cronin, 2012). The internet has also provided fansubbing communities with a means to collaborate, communicate, and share their work globally, fostering a sense of solidarity and camaraderie among members (Chua, 2012).

Specialized software tools, such as Aegisub, Subtitle Edit, and VirtualDub, have streamlined the subtitling process, making it easier for fansubbers to create, edit, and synchronize subtitles with audiovisual content (Caffrey, 2009). This reduces technical barriers to

entry and allows more individuals to participate in the practice. Machine translation technologies like Google Translate have complexly impacted fansubbing practices. While they can increase the speed and efficiency of the translation process, concerns arise about the quality and accuracy of the resulting subtitles and the potential erosion of the human touch and cultural sensitivity that characterize fan-generated translations (Jiménez-Crespo, 2013). Digital streaming platforms, like Netflix and Hulu, have impacted fansubbing practices by incorporating more diverse and localized content into their offerings, leading to a growing demand for professional subtitling services (Dwyer, 2018). This may influence the fansubbing community by creating opportunities for fansubbers to transition into professional roles or driving competition and innovation within the amateur sector.

New technologies also offer the potential to reassess the general rules of subtitling, such as the 6-second rule and the 35-character limit (Künzli & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2011). With users becoming more accustomed to reading content on various screens, it is worth considering whether these traditional guidelines remain relevant in today's digital age (O'Hagan, 2013).

3. Methodology

This section outlines the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures employed to examine the history and evolution of fansubbing communities in the Arab world. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the demographic characteristics, registration patterns, and workflow styles of Arab fansubbers.

This research utilizes a descriptive, exploratory design to investigate the development and characteristics of Arab fansubbing communities between 2001 and 2023. The study focuses on three main aspects: fansubbers' demographics, registration patterns, and workflow styles. By examining these elements, the research aims to shed light on the factors contributing to the growth and diversification of the Arab fansubbing community during this period.

The primary data source for this study is a corpus of 360 Arab fansubber profiles and associated information collected from Subscene.com, a popular subtitle-sharing platform. The corpus was compiled through purposive sampling, focusing on fansubbers who have contributed Arabic subtitles to the platform between 2001 and 2023. The data collection process involved gathering information on fansubbers' demographics (age, gender, and geographical distribution), registration patterns (registration dates and displayed profile names), and workflow styles (solo vs. collaborative fansubbing). Additional qualitative data were collected by analyzing online interactions, such as forum discussions and comments, to gain insights into the community dynamics and collaborative processes.

The data analysis process in this study involves both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative analysis includes descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, to summarize the demographic characteristics and registration patterns of the Arab fansubbers in the corpus. Furthermore, trend analysis is employed to examine the growth of the Arab fansubbing community over time, focusing on changes in the number of registered fansubbers.

The qualitative analysis involves a thematic analysis of the online interactions and comments to explore the dynamics of collaboration and teamwork within the Arab fansubbing communities. This analysis helps to contextualize the fansubbers' contributions and understand the motivations, challenges, and opportunities shaping their workflow styles.

4. Results

This section presents the demographic characteristics and registration patterns of the 360 Arab fansubbers in the corpus. These findings provide insights into the composition of the Arab fansubbing communities and the growth patterns between 2001 and 2023.

4.1. Fansubbers' demographics
4.1.1. Age and gender distribution
Although the corpus data does not provide explicit information about the age and gender of fansubbers, certain deductions can be drawn by examining their profile pictures, usernames, and online interactions. Most fansubbers seem to be young adults, most likely in their 20s and 30s, which is a pattern frequently observed in global fansubbing communities (Pérez-González, 2012). This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that fansubbers often belong to fan groups on social media, which tend to appeal to younger individuals and foster strong connections among them. In contrast, older people generally prefer congregating in person and establishing relationships based on tangible experiences.

The analysis of gender distribution indicates that a majority of fansubbers are male. At the same time, a smaller proportion identifies as female through their chosen profile names, profile pictures, or the incorporation of gendered terms in their usernames, such as *MelancholyGirl* and *Wonder.Woman*. This observed gender imbalance could result from sociocultural factors in the Arab

world that might deter female fansubbers from publicly translating certain A.V. materials covering sensitive subjects like religion, sex, and politics. Therefore, accurately determining the gender of fansubbers and understanding which genres and topics they typically translate can prove challenging.

Contrariwise, male fansubbers appear to be more inclined to display their work and gain recognition within particular fandoms, like Anime, Marvel, or Disney. Examples of these include popular Anime series like "Naruto," "One Piece," or "Attack on Titan," Marvel's superhero films such as "The Avengers" and "Black Panther," and Disney's animated classics like "The Lion King" and "Frozen." This observation underscores possible distinctions in motivations and the perception of social acceptability between male and female fansubbers in the Arab world.

4.1.2. Geographical distribution

The corpus data does not explicitly provide information about the fansubbers' countries of origin; however, certain inferences can be made by analyzing their profile pictures, usernames, and online interactions. For example, many fansubbers display their countries' flags in their profile pictures or include their country names within their usernames, providing some insights into the geographical distribution of the Arab fansubbing community.

Preliminary analysis suggests that Egypt and Iraq are among the top contributors to Arab fansubbing. This observation could be attributed to various factors, such as the political and social upheavals experienced by these countries in recent years, including the Arab Spring and regional conflicts. These events generated increased interest in foreign media that produced A.V. materials about these countries, motivating fansubbers to subtitle the content into Arabic.

4.2. Registration patterns

Between 2001 and 2023, the Arab fansubbing community experienced significant growth and diversification, particularly on the popular subtitle-sharing platform, Subscene.com. As the appetite for subtitled content in the Arab world expanded, fansubbers emerged as vital contributors, making movies, TV shows, and web series from around the globe more accessible to Arabic-speaking audiences. A notable increase in fansubbers marked this period, the establishment of various fansubbing groups, and the broadening of content genres translated on Subscene.com. In this analysis, the researcher delves into the distribution of Arab fansubbers on Subscene.com over the years, shedding light on the key trends, milestones, and factors influencing the fansubbing community during this dynamic era.

4.2.1. Fansubbers' Registration Through Time

Figure 1. Distribution of Arab fansubbers between 2001-2023
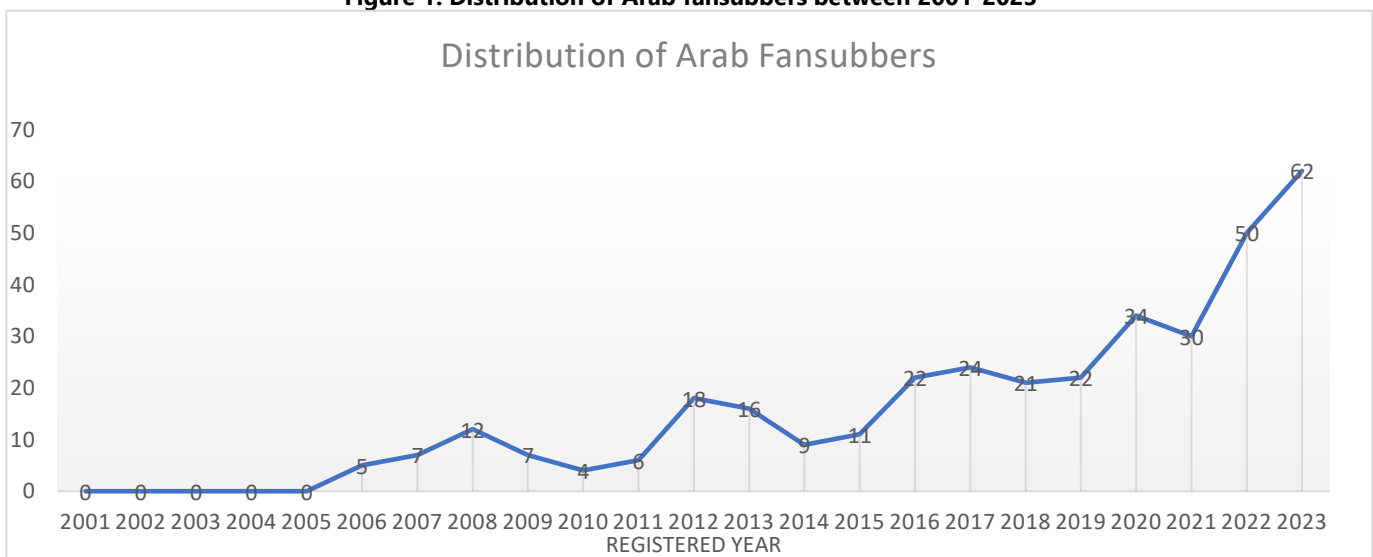
The registration patterns of Arab fansubbers between 2001 and 2023, as presented in Figure 1, show a clear upward trend in the number of new fansubbers joining the community. This pattern indicates that fansubbing has become an increasingly popular activity among Arab viewers over time, particularly to facilitate cultural exchange and collaboration. The growth of the Arab fansubbing communities appears to have been strongly influenced by the rapid expansion of internet access and the proliferation of digital media in the Arab world. Between 2006 and 2008, the number of fansubbers nearly doubled, coinciding with increased internet penetration and the widespread adoption of social media platforms in the region (Gunter et al., 2016).

The community's continued growth during the early 2010s can be attributed to the rise of streaming platforms and the growing accessibility of international content in the Arab world. Following a brief decline in the number of new registrations between 2009 and 2010, the community experienced a resurgence in 2011, with registrations steadily increasing until peaking in 2023 with 62 new fansubbers. This resurgence may be linked to the growing awareness of the importance of localization and cultural adaptation in the Arab market and the increased availability of high-quality subtitling software.

The analysis of the registration patterns of Arab fansubbers in the corpus reveals a steady and significant growth in the number of new fansubbers joining the community between 2001 and 2023. The trend suggests that fansubbing has become an increasingly popular and recognized form of cultural exchange and collaboration among Arab audiences, driven by the rapid expansion of internet access, the proliferation of digital media, and growing awareness of the importance of localization and cultural adaptation.

4.2.2. Fansubbers' displayed profile names
The analysis sheds light on the different types of names fansubbers use and their preferences for working individually or collaboratively. Based on the compiled corpus, Arab fansubbers' displayed profile names can be classified into three categories (see Figure 2).

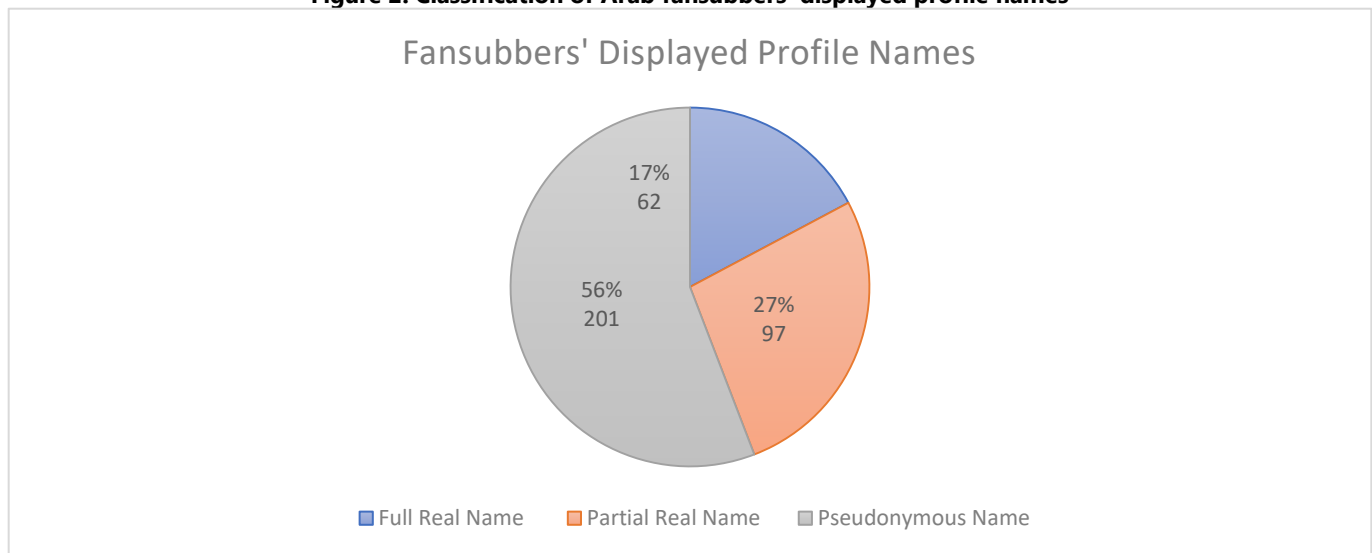**Figure 2. Classification of Arab fansubbers' displayed profile names**

Figure 2 shows that most fansubbers (56%) use a pseudonymous name, which may be attributed to privacy concerns, personal preferences, or the desire to maintain anonymity in online spaces (Diaz-Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006). In contrast, a smaller proportion of fansubbers choose to use their full (17%) or partial (27%) real names, suggesting a greater willingness to disclose their identity and potentially foster trust and credibility within the community.

These findings emphasize the preferences among Arab fansubbers when choosing their displayed profile names. This variety illustrates the intricate relationship between personal identity and the desire for anonymity within the Arab fansubbing community. Factors such as cultural norms, gender roles, societal expectations, and individual motivations all contribute to this complexity. Therefore, some fansubbers may maintain a low profile to avoid potential backlash or criticism. In contrast, others may embrace their passion and showcase their work under recognizable pseudonyms. This dynamic not only demonstrates the diverse nature of the Arab fansubbing community but also sheds light on the broader social and cultural contexts in which these fansubbers operate.

4.3. Fansubbers' Workflow
The corpus provides valuable insights into the inner workings and dynamics of teamwork and cooperation within Arab fansubbing communities. Analysis of fansubbing workflows and preferences helps contextualize the practical contributions of fansubbers in terms of their preferred working styles and division of labor.

4.3.1. Solo vs. Collaborative fansubbing
Based on analysis of the compiled corpus, Arab fansubbers' contributions can be classified into two distinct categories - solo workflows and collaborative team workflows (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Fansubbers workflow style distribution
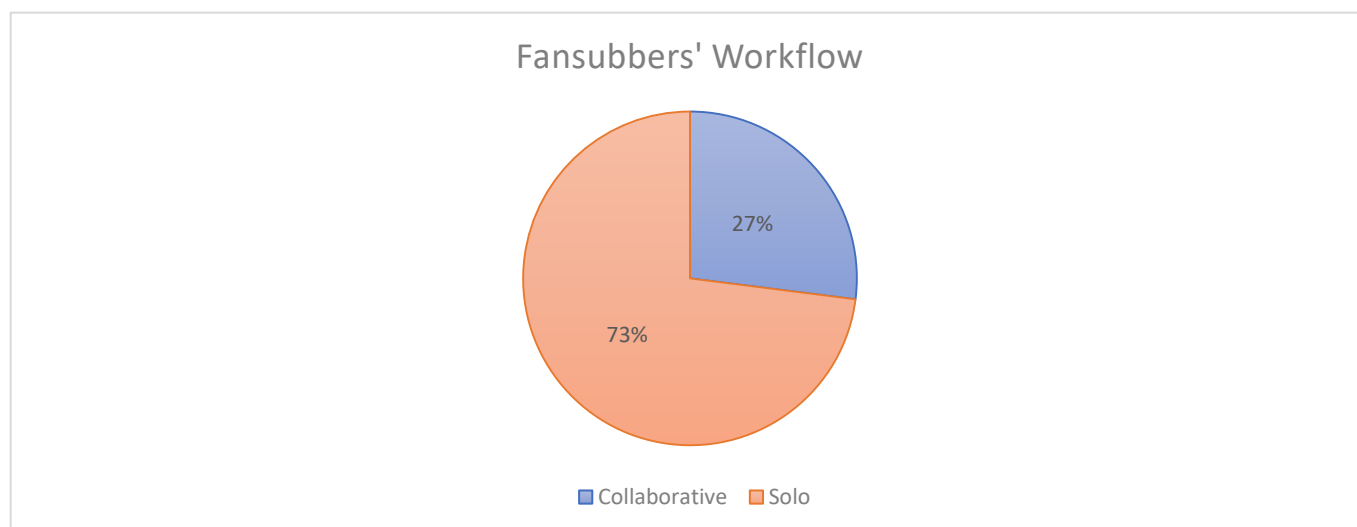
Solo fansubbers take on the entire translation process independently, handling tasks like timing, translation, editing, quality checks and finalization entirely by themselves. According to the data, a significant portion (73%) of Arab fansubbers prefer operating as solo practitioners. This indicates a penchant for working independently without active collaboration from fellow translators. Reasons motivating this could include personal preferences to retain control, flexibility in setting their own pace and schedules, concerns about disagreements when collaborating, or a simple desire to see their own vision reflected consistently throughout the final translated product. However, eschewing teamwork also has drawbacks - solo fansubbers lose out on opportunities for mutual learning, skill development and leveraging diverse expertise that collaboration brings.

On the other hand, collaborative fansubbing involves divvying up specialized tasks like translation, editing, timing, quality checks, graphics etc. amongst a coordinated team with clearly defined roles (O'hagan, 2009). As per the data, over a quarter (27%) of Arab fansubbers prefer being part of such collaborative crews. Team workflows encourage camaraderie, solidarity and accumulation of collective knowledge through cooperation between fellow translation enthusiasts. Allowing members to play to their individual strengths also results in translations that leverage diverse skill sets and perspectives, often enhancing overall quality. However, overcoming challenges like scheduling alignment, disagreements and losing some creative control also require effort.

In summary, both independent and collaborative setups have their own merits and limitations. A fansubber's working style is governed chiefly by personal preferences, goals, and project needs. Recognizing and embracing the diversity of contributions from solo artists and teams with various configurations is essential for the Arab fansubbing community's pluralism and continued success. These creative individuals and groups collectively enable wider, faster subtitled access to foreign media for Arabic-speaking audiences through voluntary cultural and linguistic mediation.

4.3.2. Factors Arab fansubbers influencing workflow styles
A variety of factors can impact Arab fansubbers' preferences for working collaboratively or individually, including:

Task complexity: More intricate or time-consuming projects may benefit from the division of labor and the pooling of resources that collaboration offers. In contrast, more straightforward tasks might be more efficiently completed by solo fansubbers (Diaz-Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006). For instance, translating an entire movie or a TV series with a complex plot and specialized terminology could benefit from a collaborative approach. Translating a short video or an episode of a less complex show might be more manageable for a single fansubber.

Skillsets and expertise: Fansubbers possessing complementary skills or specialized knowledge in certain areas, such as technical jargon, cultural references, or specific languages, may prefer collaborating to produce higher-quality subtitles. In contrast, those with a broad range of skills and experience might be more inclined to work independently (Pérez-González, 2012).
Personal preferences and motivations: Individual motivations, such as the desire for social interaction, recognition within the fansubbing community, or maintaining creative autonomy over the translation process, can shape fansubbers' preferences for either collaborative or solo work (O'hagan, 2009). Some fansubbers may thrive on teamwork and shared recognition, while others may prefer to showcase their abilities and retain full control over their projects. These insights into Arab fansubbers' workflow

styles underscore the diversity of working approaches within the community and the intricate relationship between individual motivations, skills, and project requirements. A deeper understanding of these dynamics can lead to a more comprehensive appreciation of the fansubbing phenomenon in the Arab world.

4.3.3. Fansubbers engagement

The fansubbing community's engagement encompasses a wide array of collaborative and solo contributions, as evidenced by the total number of A.V. materials fansubbed by groups and individual fansubbers. This diversity in engagement styles showcases the adaptability and creativity inherent within the fansubbing communities, where factors such as individual preferences, skillsets, and project requirements often dictate the chosen approach. In this analysis, the researcher examines the scope of fansubbers' engagement by quantifying the total number of A.V. materials fansubbed collaboratively and individually.

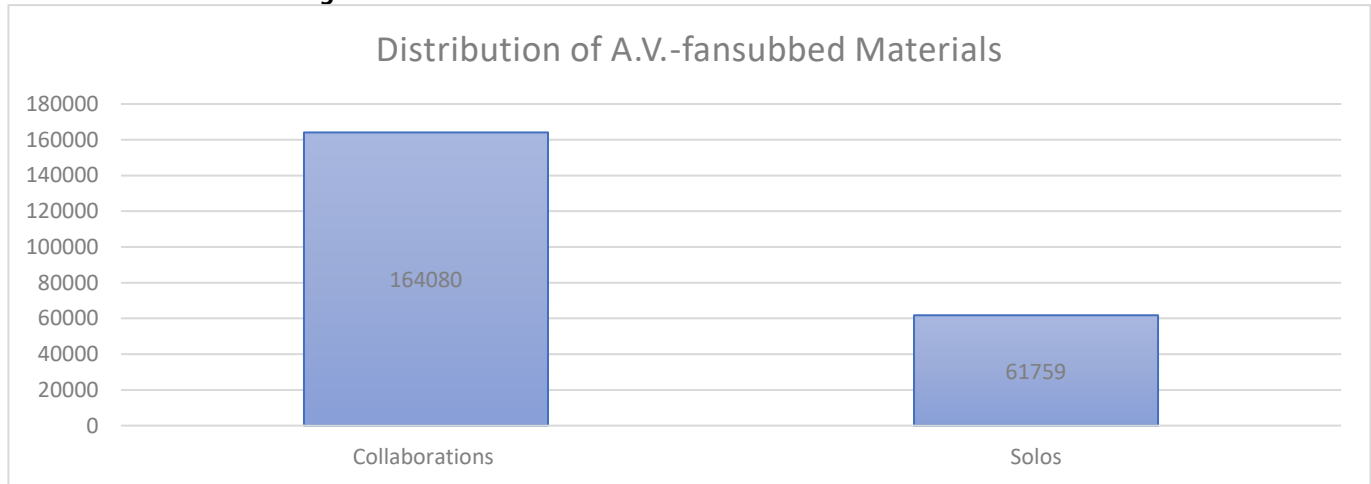**Figure 4. Distribution of the total number of AV-fansubbed materials**

Figure 4 shows a considerable difference between collaborative projects and solo efforts. For example, the total number of materials fansubbed in collaboration is 164080, while solo efforts account for 61759. This suggests that fansubbers are more likely to engage in collaborative projects within fan communities.

The variability in engagement levels among fansubbers may be attributed to a range of factors, such as individual motivations, time commitments, language proficiency, and the availability of materials and opportunities for collaboration within the community (Pérez-González, 2012). For example, some fansubbers may be more motivated by personal interests or a desire to improve their language skills. In contrast, others may be driven by a sense of community or the opportunity to contribute to a larger project (Diaz-Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006).

The increased engagement in collaborative projects is also related to the growing complexity of A.V. materials and the need for specialized knowledge in translation, localization, and cultural adaptation (O'hagan, 2009). By working together, fansubbers can leverage their collective expertise to tackle these challenges more effectively, leading to higher-quality subtitles and a more enjoyable viewing experience for audiences (Bogucki, 2004).

Moreover, the collaborative nature of fansubbing projects may help to develop interpersonal relationships and social networks within the community, fostering a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose among participants (Simó & Rosaria, 2005). This, in turn, may encourage more fansubbers to join the community and contribute to projects, further increasing the overall engagement levels observed in the corpus.

The analysis of fansubbers' engagement patterns reveals a considerable difference between the number of A.V. materials fansubbed in collaboration and those produced by solo efforts, with collaborations being the predominant mode of engagement. The variability in engagement levels can be attributed to individual motivations, time commitments, language proficiency, and the availability of materials and opportunities for collaboration. The high level of collaborative engagement also reflects the growing complexity of audiovisual materials and the importance of teamwork in addressing the challenges associated with translation, localization, and cultural adaptation.

4.4. Thematic Analysis
4.4.1. Forum Discussions
The fansubbing community is characterized by a rich discourse surrounding the practice, process, and selection of audiovisual materials to be subtitled. This discourse unfolds in various forum discussions, categorized into four primary types: general discussions, Subscene commentaries, Subscene Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), and subtitle tutorials. General discussions provide a space for open-ended conversations about fansubbers' preferences, challenges with subtitling tools, dialect difficulties, and opportunities to connect enthusiasts of specific genres for collaborative projects.

Subscene commentaries, on the other hand, offer a platform for analyzing fansubbed materials, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, and reporting title errors. In addressing practical concerns, the Subscene FAQ responds to inquiries about the file upload and download process, the rating system for fansubbed content, and any technical issues users may face on the website. Complementing these forums, the subtitle tutorial forum serves as a valuable resource for experienced and novice fansubbers, featuring in-depth discussions on using various subtitling tools and offering guidance on stylistic choices such as font type, color, placement, and punctuation conventions.

4.4.2. Displayed names and profile pictures
The thematic analysis uncovers an intriguing practice where members opt for self-representation using avatars and real images of their favorite movie heroes. For example, fansubbers might display profile pictures of famous characters such as Tony Stark (Iron Man) from the Marvel Cinematic Universe or use avatars inspired by iconic figures like Harry Potter from the eponymous series. These visual representations not only express the fansubbers' tastes and preferences but also contribute to establishing a unique identity within the community.

Adopting movie heroes' names and images impacts fansubbing practices in several ways. First and foremost, it fosters a sense of camaraderie and rapport among fansubbers, creating an environment conducive to collaboration and mutual support in translation endeavors. Furthermore, such practices may prompt fansubbers to prioritize projects featuring their admired heroes, thereby influencing the selection and distribution of translated content. Lastly, using these names and images can facilitate cultural exchange and promote various artistic works across linguistic boundaries, as fansubbers share their enthusiasm for specific characters with others in the community. Therefore, incorporating movie heroes' names and avatars plays a vital role in shaping the dynamics, preferences, and influence of the Arab fansubbing community.

5. Discussion
This study delves into the dramatic growth and evolution of fansubbing in the Arab World, spanning from 2001 to 2023. Over these two decades, the Arab fansubbing community has experienced a considerable expansion in membership and output, demonstrating its escalating prominence as a vehicle for cultural exchange and media consumption. This growth is inextricably linked to the swift proliferation of internet access and digital media in the region, which has expedited the sharing and distribution of subtitled content among diverse audiences.

The fansubbing community is characterized by a rich discourse surrounding the practice, process, and selection of audiovisual materials to be subtitled. This discourse unfolds in various forum discussions, categorized into four primary types: general discussions, Subscene commentaries, Subscene Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), and subtitle tutorials. General discussions provide a space for open-ended conversations about fansubbers' preferences, challenges with subtitling tools, dialect difficulties, and opportunities to connect enthusiasts of specific genres for collaborative projects. Subscene commentaries, on the other hand, offer a platform for analyzing fansubbed materials, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, and reporting title errors. In addressing practical concerns, the Subscene FAQ responds to inquiries about the file upload and download process, the rating system for fansubbed content, and any technical issues users may face on the website. Complementing these forums, the subtitle tutorial forum serves as a valuable resource for experienced and novice fansubbers, featuring in-depth discussions on using various subtitling tools and offering guidance on stylistic choices such as font type, color, placement, and punctuation conventions.

The thematic analysis uncovers an intriguing practice where members opt for self-representation using avatars and authentic images of their favorite movie heroes. For example, fansubbers might display profile pictures of famous characters such as Tony Stark (Iron Man) from the Marvel Cinematic Universe or use avatars inspired by iconic figures like Harry Potter from the eponymous series. These visual representations not only express the fansubbers' tastes and preferences but also contribute to establishing a unique identity within the community.
Adopting movie heroes' names and images impacts fansubbing practices in several ways. First and foremost, it fosters a sense of camaraderie and rapport among fansubbers, creating an environment conducive to collaboration and mutual support in translation endeavors. Furthermore, such practices may prompt fansubbers to prioritize projects featuring their admired heroes, thereby influencing the selection and distribution of translated content. Lastly, using these names and images can facilitate cultural

exchange and promote various artistic works across linguistic boundaries, as fansubbers share their enthusiasm for specific characters with others in the community. Therefore, incorporating movie heroes' names and avatars plays a vital role in shaping the dynamics, preferences, and influence of the Arab fansubbing community.

A confluence of factors has contributed to the rise and development of fansubbing in the Arab World. These include increased access to digital technologies, the emergence of online communities and platforms, and the growing demand for diverse and accessible A.V. content. Moreover, the motivations driving fansubbers—such as the pursuit of creative expression, social interaction, and cultural exchange—have played a pivotal role in cultivating a dynamic and engaged fansubbing community.

The burgeoning of fansubbing in the Arab World carries significant implications for both the media industry and Arab audiences. For media producers and distributors, fansubbing embodies a dual-edged sword, as it underscores the necessity for prompt, high-quality, and culturally sensitive translations to satisfy audience demands. Concurrently, fansubbing can help bridge linguistic and cultural divides, disseminate varied media content, and contribute to a more inclusive and global media landscape.
For Arab audiences, fansubbing provides access to a wider array of A.V. materials, encompassing those that may not be obtainable through official channels due to language, cultural, or political barriers. Fansubbing also empowers audiences to engage more proactively with media content as both consumers and producers, potentially augmenting their media literacy and critical awareness.

The ascent of fansubbing in the Arab World has accentuated the need for official subtitling services to adapt and respond to the shifting dynamics of media consumption and audience predilections. Fansubbing offers a valuable alternative to official subtitling services, particularly in instances where official translations are unavailable, delayed, or unsatisfactory. However, this phenomenon also engenders concerns about quality, consistency, and intellectual property rights.

As the fansubbing community persists in its evolution, researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders need to scrutinize the relationship between fansubbing and official subtitling services critically. This evaluation will pave the way for collaboration, innovation, and the developing of more adaptive and inclusive translation practices within the Arab World. The vibrant discourse and self-representation practices within the fansubbing community and their impact on content selection and distribution merit further investigation to comprehensively understand the community's dynamics and preferences. Such knowledge will be invaluable in fostering a more culturally diverse and globally connected media landscape that benefits industry stakeholders and audiences.

6. Conclusion
The paper explores the history, growth, and practices of fansubbing in the Arab world between 2001 and 2023, shedding light on the complex interplay of cultural, technological, and social factors shaping the contemporary media landscape. By analyzing a corpus of 360 Arab fansubbers and their contributions to the Subscene.com website, the study has provided insights into the demographics, preferences, and working styles of Arab fansubbers and the impact of technological advancements and collaborative efforts on the development of the fansubbing community.

The findings highlight the significant growth of fansubbing in the Arab world over the past two decades, driven by increased access to digital technologies, the emergence of online communities and platforms, and the demand for diverse and accessible A.V. content. The study also underscores the implications of fansubbing for the media industry, Arab audiences, and the relationship between fansubbing and official subtitling services, revealing the need for greater collaboration, innovation, and responsiveness to audience demands in the field of audiovisual translation.

Several strategies are employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study's findings, including data triangulation, member checking, and transparency in the research process. Data triangulation involves corroborating the findings from the corpus with insights from the thematic analysis of online interactions, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the results. Member checking involves seeking feedback from members of the Arab fansubbing community to verify the accuracy and relevance of the findings. Lastly, transparency in the research process is maintained through a clear and detailed description of the methodology and data analysis procedures.

However, the study has some limitations. Due to the reliance on publicly available information, the data may not capture the full extent of the Arab fansubbing community or account for unregistered or inactive fansubbers. Furthermore, purposive sampling may introduce selection bias, as it focuses on a subset of fansubbers on Subscene.com. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the history and evolution of fansubbing communities in the Arab world and can serve as a foundation for future research in this area.

Fansubbing in the Arab world contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of media production, consumption, and translation in the region, with implications for industry practices, audience engagement, and the development of more inclusive and diverse media ecosystems. As fansubbing continues to evolve, it is vital for researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to critically examine the motivations, challenges, and opportunities facing fansubbers and their communities and work toward promoting more effective, responsive, and culturally sensitive translation practices in the Arab world.

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