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Master's Thesis
Academic Year 2024

Famous

A New Ecosystem Model to Legalize Anime
Fansubbing and Combat Piracy



Keio University
Graduate School of Media Design

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A Master's Thesis
submitted to Keio University Graduate School of Media Design
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Media Design

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Abstract of Master's Thesis of Academic Year 2024

Fanous

A New Ecosystem Model to Legalize Anime Fansubbing and Combat Piracy

Category: Design

Summary

The "Fanous" ecosystem model aims to legitimize fansubbing and combat piracy by integrating unofficial fansubbers with legal streaming services. The model enhances the viewing experience and provides fansubbers with opportunities for sustainable income, contributing to the growth of a legal anime ecosystem and helping reduce piracy globally.

Positive feedback indicates the model's potential to combat piracy and support legal fansubbing. The model has received strong support from fans and fansubbers, despite the need for some improvements. Distributors and streaming services are optimistic about collaborating with fansubbers under more regulated terms, while intellectual property holders have expressed openness to working through intermediaries to ensure quality and compliance.

Despite its potential, the model faces limitations such as resistance from piracy site users, web browser-only support, and advancements in AI translation. Addressing these limitations involves future works to improve ad-free alternatives to attract users, integrate the model with streaming services, and research on using AI to enhance translations while preserving the role of human fansubbers.

Keywords:

anime, intellectual property, streaming service, fansubbing, piracy

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background

Anime piracy has existed for over 40 years, dating back to a time when anime was rare outside of Japan. Before the advent of legal streaming services, Fansubbers played a crucial role in spreading Japanese anime worldwide. Their efforts were the backbone of the anime fan community, as they subtitled many works that were otherwise unavailable outside Japan. During this period, people copied anime onto VHS tapes, added fansubs, and sold them at small conventions and sometimes through mail.

As time passed and anime's popularity grew, piracy websites increased. One of the most notable was "Crunchyroll," which started as a piracy site before transforming into the first official subscription streaming service dedicated to anime. [1] With legal streaming services' expansion and increasing reach, concerns about intellectual property rights and piracy emerged. Anime, which was once subtitled and distributed illegally for free, became legally available on multiple streaming services, creating legal and ethical complexities regarding the continuation of these practices.

A study published by the Tokyo-based Content Overseas Distribution Association (CODA) revealed that in 2022, Japanese media companies lost approximately 1.95 to 2.20 trillion yen due to pirated content traded online. In comparison, a similar survey conducted in 2019 estimated the damages at around 333.3-430 billion yen. The latest figures indicate a fivefold increase in estimated damages. While the report did not specify the exact proportion of anime losses, it did show that video losses (including anime) in 2022 ranged from approximately 906.5 billion yen to

1,429.7 billion yen. [2]

As of January 2024, there are over 25,000 unique anime titles, according to MyAnimeList. [3] Although Crunchyroll has brought many anime titles to the audience, it recently surpassed only 1,800, with limited availability in some regions and countries. [4] Similarly, Netflix offers around 225 anime titles outside Japan, and their availability varies by country, representing a small fraction of the available anime. [5] In contrast, piracy sites likely host all 25,000 anime, making it very easy for viewers to find any anime they want without paying for multiple subscriptions. This vast availability of free content makes it challenging for legal streaming services to compete with illegal sites.

Lack of official availability is not necessarily the sole reason for piracy. In 2022, half of the most pirated shows in the United States were anime, all readily available on an official streaming service. "Chainsaw Man" had the highest piracy rate of any show in America, despite being available on Hulu. [6] This highlights another reason for piracy: people do not want to buy a subscription for just one anime. Simply put, everyone who watched "Chainsaw Man" on an illegal site did not have a Hulu subscription; otherwise, they would have watched it there.

Piracy sites and fansub groups continue their activities despite the losses they cause to the anime industry and the increased availability of legal content. The 2023 Piracy by Industry Data Review report published by MUSO highlights anime's dominance in TV piracy, with 26.5% of global visits to TV piracy sites being for anime. Eight of the top ten most pirated TV shows worldwide were anime titles. [7]

As Gabe Newell, co-founder of the video game digital distribution service Steam, once said, "Piracy is a result of bad service." [8] Many viewers turn to piracy due to poor official streaming services, high subscription costs, limited content on each service, difficulty accessing official Japanese anime for non-Japanese and non-English speakers due to lack of legal subtitles, or geographic blocking. Piracy sites offer a vast library of anime for free and easily accessible, making paid subscriptions seem unjustifiable. Therefore, services must improve by adopting a new model that cooperates with fansubbers to meet global audience needs, creates affordable and effective streaming services, and provides legal multi-language

content. This would enhance intellectual property rights, reduce reliance on illegal sites, and support sustainable industry development.

When comparing anime titles streamed simulcastly and provided with Arabic subtitles over the last four years (2020-2023) on official streaming services with piracy sites using fansubs, it was observed that while the number of legally available anime on official streaming services in the Arab region increased, there was also a rise in the number of anime titles subtitled in Arabic by fansubbers, despite legal Arabic subtitles being available. Approximately 25% of anime titles were available with both official subtitles and Arabic fansubs, while about 35% of titles were not officially available but were subtitled by fansubbers. [9]

Table 1.1 Numbers of Simulcast Anime with Arabic Subtitles (2020-2023)

Year	Just Fansub	Just Official Sub	Both	Total of Anime
2023	35	103	53	191
2022	45	60	46	151
2021	67	56	27	150
2020	63	23	24	110
Total	210	242	150	602
%	35%	40%	25%	100%

Simulcast Anime with Arabic Subtitles (2020-2023)

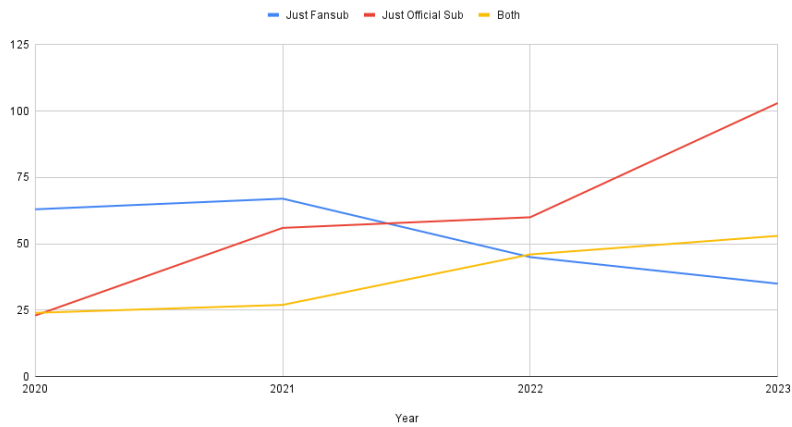


Figure 1.1 Changes in Simulcast Anime with Arabic Subtitles (2020-2023)

The limited research papers related to intellectual property rights issues in the field of anime fansubbing and piracy in the Arab world represent a significant challenge, as the enforcement of copyright laws in many Arab countries is weak, allowing pirated content to spread easily. The available literature shows an apparent lack of studies focusing on anime fansubbing and piracy and the associated legal issues in the Arab world, despite some limited documentation of how authorities handle copyright infringements. [10] Therefore, there is an urgent need for more research focusing on intellectual property rights in the context of fansubbing in the Arab world to provide a deeper understanding of the legal and ethical issues and to develop more effective policies to protect the rights of original creators.

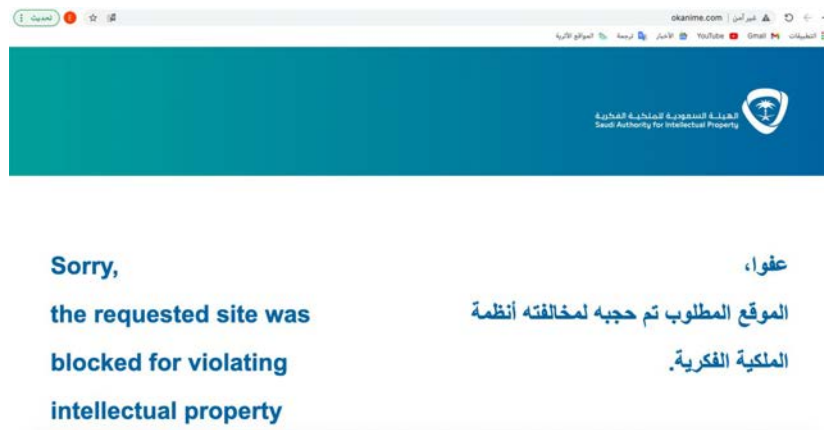


Figure 1.2 Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property Blocked Anime Piracy Site

1.2. Research Objectives

The research problem is the continued phenomenon of anime piracy and watching content through illegal sites, supported by fansubs. Anime fans worldwide face significant challenges accessing legally subtitled anime content, pushing them to rely on piracy sites. This issue is exacerbated by weak legal streaming services that fail to meet audience needs effectively, especially in non-Japanese and non-English speaking countries. Additionally, fansub groups contribute to this problem by providing unofficial subtitles, leading to intellectual property violations and reduced potential revenues for anime intellectual property holders. This

issue is central to the research to understand how to address it innovatively and effectively.

The research aims to design a new ecosystem model that legally engages fansub groups in the subtitling process of anime. This model seeks to legitimize these groups' activities, reduce piracy, and enhance intellectual property rights. By enabling fansub groups to work legally, a balance can be achieved between all stakeholders, including intellectual property holders, distributors, official streaming services, fansubbers, and anime fans.

This new model will create a collaborative environment among intellectual property holders, distributors, global streaming services, and fansubbers, helping to achieve multiple goals, including providing high-quality legal content. Additionally, this model will allow fansub groups to participate actively in the anime industry, enhancing the quality of provided subtitles and offering a better viewing experience for users. The model aims to reduce reliance on illegal sites, strengthen the position of Japanese anime in international markets, and create a more sustainable and collaborative future for the anime industry and its fans worldwide.

The research's primary hypotheses are that current digital streaming services have failed to combat piracy effectively and that integrating fansubbers into the business model of legal streaming services could be a legal alternative for anime fans. The research seeks to answer important questions: Why do fansub groups continue their activities despite the expansion of legal streaming services? Why do fans prefer watching fansubbed anime? How can fansubbers' participation be legalized to benefit all concerned parties? By exploring these hypotheses and answering these questions, the research aims to present practical and effective solutions to the piracy problem and enhance intellectual property rights, supporting the positive and sustainable development of the anime industry. The research hopes to create a fairer and more sustainable system for all stakeholders in this industry, including fans, fansubbers, distributors/streaming services, and intellectual property holders.

Chapter 2

Related Works

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1 Historical Background of Anime Fansubbing

Anime fansubbing has experienced significant growth and change since its inception in the 1980s. [11] Initially, fansubbing occurred on VHS tapes and was shared through informal enthusiast clubs. [12] However, with the emergence of the Internet in the 1990s, fansubbing transformed, and digital distribution became possible through Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channels. [13] The 2000s brought further advancements with the introduction of BitTorrent, a peer-to-peer file-sharing protocol that improved the efficiency of fansubbing. [14] In the mid-2000s, web 2.0, including video-sharing sites like YouTube, provided new opportunities for sharing fan-subtitled content. [11] In recent times, the popularity of fansubbing has been affected by the emergence of legal simulcasting streaming services like Crunchyroll. These services provide official subtitles alongside their broadcast schedule and have been available since the late 2000s and continue to be so today. [1]

2.1.2 The Motivations of Anime Fansubbers

Fansubbers are passionate individuals who seek to share anime with others. As Minako O'Hagan noted, this phenomenon began in the 80s as a reaction to the overly edited, officially dubbed versions shown on television networks outside of Japan. With the lack of official subtitles, fansubs became a valuable alternative, allowing viewers to understand the original text. This movement was driven by the desire to fill the gap in official distribution caused by delays or the absence

of anime releases outside of Japan, helping to deliver content promptly to the audience. [11] Hye-Kyung Lee emphasizes that fansubbers' primary motivation is to provide anime to non-Japanese-speaking audiences without access to this content through licensed distribution. Moreover, the fansubbing process offers an avenue for creative expression, enabling fansubbers to incorporate their insights into dialogues and cultural references that might be missing in official subtitles, thus enhancing the cultural and authentic details of the anime. Fansub groups also compete to provide high-quality subtitles quickly, improving the viewing experience for anime fans worldwide. [12]

2.1.3 The Impact of Fansubbers on the Anime Industry

Fansubbing fosters numerous beneficial societal effects on a global scale within the anime community. Fansubs provide consumers with fresh avenues to discover all manner of niche titles that are initially unknown. [12] Likewise, breaking down linguistic barriers provides the impetus behind generating significant free pre-publicity, increasing diversity among viewership, and expanding global exposure, so it can no longer be restricted as an exclusive within original broadcasting channels. [11] Moreover, fansub enthusiasts come together regardless of where they are from, creating close communities and sharing their passion with each other, bonding closely across borders as if they were best friends found next door. [12,14]

However valuable it may be to promote such inclusivity levels on online viewing platforms or elsewhere, simultaneously, it can cause substantial financial losses to anime producers and official subtitling companies, affecting the entire anime industry. [13] Furthermore, quality control is another issue with fansubbed content, as fansubbers frequently work without professional supervision or training, leading to narrative distortions and linguistic errors. [15] Lastly, those who engage in fansubbing should be aware that it circumvents copyright laws and infringes on intellectual property rights, ultimately fostering anime piracy. [11,16]

2.1.4 The Legal Challenges of Fansubbing

Fansubbing is an informal practice where fans subtitle anime shows, and anime piracy sites distribute them without permission from intellectual property rights

holders. These sites use the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) to protect themselves, claiming they are internet service providers and not responsible for the content uploaded by users. [17] A notable example is Crunchyroll, which started as an illegitimate site that consisted entirely of fansubs and later transformed into a legitimate streaming platform. Crunchyroll adopted a policy similar to YouTube's in handling DMCA notices, protecting itself from lawsuits by complying with copyright notifications and blaming users for uploading illegal content. [1]

The principle of fair use allows limited use of copyrighted content without permission, such as criticism or educational purposes. [18] However, defending fair use for fansubs might be doomed to fail. Sean Kirkpatrick explains that fansubs are not transformative and have the same entertainment value as the original works, often of high quality that harms the licensing value of the content. While fansubs during the VHS era were of lower quality and posed less of a threat, today's digital fansubs often exceed the quality of official releases, making it more difficult to defend them under fair use. [19] Nathaniel Noda argues that fansubs should be covered by fair use, excluding licensed series. [20] Zeng Yueying emphasized that adding subtitles to videos for personal enjoyment is not inherently illegal, but the main issue lies in distributing these subtitled videos online and accessing them without compensating the copyright holders. [21]

Addressing these tensions requires a careful approach that balances creators' rights and global audience needs through discussions on licensing arrangements, cooperative initiatives, or evolving legal frameworks. The Intellectual Property Strategic Program in Japan recognizes these conflicts and advocates for the use of "soft law," a system based on guidelines and self-regulation instead of strict laws. [22] Audrey V Guerra suggests using guidelines and micro-licenses to encompass fan activities, allowing for the legal and creative use of protected works. This approach aims to reduce legal ambiguity and encourage innovation and collaboration between creators and rights holders. Through this system, a better balance can be achieved between protecting intellectual property rights and supporting fan participation and collective creativity. [23]

2.1.5 Anime Fansubbing in the Arab World

Fansubbing of anime in the Arab world is a distinctive phenomenon that reflects a passion for anime and a desire to make it available in Arabic to a broad audience of Arabic speakers. Yasmin M. El Ali indicates that fansubbers often produce high-quality subtitles compared to official subtitles, thanks to the dedication and passion they show in their work. The approaches vary between groups, with some striving to maintain the original texts without modification, while others opt to soften or delete sensitive content to suit the Arab audience. Interaction with the audience plays a significant role in improving translation quality and meeting viewers' expectations, as they receive feedback and comments from fans through forums and social network services and take this feedback seriously to improve their future subtitles. [24]



Figure 2.1 An Example of Arab Fansubbers Passion via Onscreen Text Imitation

Legally, El Ali explains that the enforcement of copyright laws is weak in many Arab countries, allowing fansubbers to operate relatively freely without facing significant legal consequences. Despite being aware of the legal and ethical risks, they continue subtitling driven by a passion and a desire to provide high-quality content for the Arab audience and fill the gap left by the lack of official subtitles. Fansubbers believe that some production companies overlook these violations because they help expand the fan base and increase the popularity of anime. They see themselves as contributors to spreading anime culture and raising awareness

about it, reinforcing their determination to provide distinguished content despite legal challenges. This commitment reflects their desire to meet the needs of their audience of anime fans and to ensure they stay updated with the latest episodes and releases on time, providing a comprehensive viewing experience that meets the expectations of followers in the Arab world. [24]

2.2. Case Studies

2.2.1 Crunchyroll: Fansubbers from Piracy to Legitimacy

Founded in 2006, Crunchyroll initially operated as a piracy site, hosting fan-uploaded and fan-subtitled anime content without proper licensing. The platform heavily relied on the efforts of anime enthusiasts who provided translations and subtitles at no cost, helping it quickly amass a large user base. Despite its success, the reliance on pirated content was not sustainable. By late 2007, Crunchyroll received a significant investment of \$4.05 million from Venrock, facilitating the transition toward legal operations. In early 2008, Crunchyroll began streaming its first legally licensed series. The pivotal moment came in January 2009 when Crunchyroll signed an agreement with TV Tokyo and removed all pirated content from its platform. This move aimed to transform Crunchyroll into a legitimate business, gain Japanese anime producers' trust, and achieve profitability through licensed, high-quality content. Following this shift, Crunchyroll hired many amateur fansubbers, integrating their skills into a professional framework. This transition from unpaid fan labor to professional employment significantly enhanced content quality, expanded the audience and solidified Crunchyroll's position as the world's largest legal anime streaming platform. [1]

Crunchyroll received investments from major companies such as The Chernin Group and TV Tokyo, and was later fully acquired by AT&T. The platform expanded to over 70 million registered users and 3 million paid subscribers, with anime subtitled into over 12 languages and services provided in over 200 countries and regions. In 2019, Crunchyroll became the majority owner of Viz Media Europe, making it the largest distributor of anime and manga in Europe. In August 2020, Sony began negotiations to purchase Crunchyroll from WarnerMedia, which

was a subsidiary of AT&T, and an agreement was reached in December 2020 for \$1.175 billion. This acquisition was part of Sony’s strategy to unify the global anime streaming market under its umbrella, as it already owned Funimation. The merger between Crunchyroll and Funimation aims to strengthen Sony’s position as a major force in the global anime market. [25]

2.2.2 Viki: Professionalizing Fansubbing

Viki represents an innovative model utilizing fansubbing to provide multilingual subtitles for global media content. Traditionally, fansubbing was associated with Japanese anime, but Viki has expanded this concept to include Asian dramas, especially Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. The platform relies on a vast network of volunteers who translate content into more than 200 languages, ensuring high-quality translations by offering advanced training programs for these volunteers. Viki uses specialized software that enables real-time collaboration among users worldwide, and its streaming model ensures that subtitles are embedded within the video content, preventing unauthorized downloads and maintaining copyright compliance. Through licensing deals, Viki has made fansubbing a legal and profitable activity, helping expand its audience base and strengthen its presence in the media market. However, questions still need to be answered about the sustainability and ethics of this model, as fansubbers do not receive financial compensation while the platform aims to generate profits. [26, 27]

Although Viki does not primarily focus on anime, its success in transforming fansubbing from an illegal activity to a legitimate and profitable one offers valuable insights. The platform has organized its fansubbing community, enabling fansubbers to improve their skills and produce high-quality work. This transformation has legitimized fansubbing and helped build strong relationships with major production companies, allowing Viki to achieve profitability through a business model based on collaborative subtitling efforts and revenue sharing. [26] This model demonstrates how other anime-focused communities can benefit from Viki’s experience in legally and profitably organizing and activating fansubbing communities, providing valuable lessons in turning fans’ passion into a recognized and economically beneficial activity while enhancing global cultural exchange.

2.2.3 Amara: Crowdsourced Subtitling for Digital Content

Amara is an innovative online platform that utilizes crowdsourcing to translate digital content and make it accessible to everyone by adding subtitles and captions with the help of a global community of volunteers. Volunteers play a crucial role in improving the quality of translations by reviewing and editing them, thus enhancing cultural and linguistic diversity. Amara relies on a transparent quality control system based on community collaboration, where the community contributes to improving translations and solving problems collaboratively, like Wikipedia, ensuring transparency and open accountability. Amara integrates with video hosting platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, making it a flexible and easy-to-integrate solution for websites. Utilizing Amara's editing tool, significant organizations such as TED, Udacity, and GitHub can efficiently and quickly add subtitles to their videos. [28]

The TED experience is a notable case study for utilizing Amara to achieve crowdsourced subtitling. The Open Translation Project (OTP) for TED was launched in 2009 to translate talks into multiple languages, facilitating the dissemination of inspiring ideas across different languages. The volunteer community in this project consists of professionals and enthusiasts, all dedicated to spreading knowledge and improving translation quality. Amara provides educational and training tools to ensure volunteers adhere to high translation standards. Amara's user-friendly editing interface enables volunteers to accurately and swiftly synchronize subtitles with videos, thus increasing global access to digital content and promoting cross-cultural understanding. [29]

2.2.4 Subscene: Sudden Shutdown

The Subscene website was unique in providing subtitles for movies and TV series. Over twenty years, it succeeded in building a vast database containing subtitles in various languages worldwide. Users relied on the site to download subtitle files that were continuously added and updated by the other users and then merged with video files downloaded from different sites. This system offered a wide range of options for choosing the appropriate subtitles, helping them achieve a better and more personalized viewing experience. Thus, Subscene became an indispensable

resource for movie and TV series enthusiasts seeking diverse subtitles.

On May 2, 2024, Subscene announced its sudden shutdown within 24 hours, causing chaos and dissatisfaction among its loyal users. [30] The announcement came without warning, while later reports confirmed that the site was not financially sustainable due to increasing costs and declining visitor numbers. This decline can be partly attributed to competition from streaming services like Netflix, which now offers subtitles in multiple languages, reducing the need for sites like Subscene. In addition to financial challenges, the site faced ongoing legal challenges from copyright holders. Despite this, the site's content was preserved by independent archiving teams, who uploaded a massive 90GB database online to ensure subtitles were not lost. This incident highlights the significant challenges free sites face, relying on user contributions, and reflects the shift towards relying on streaming services that provide subtitled content more conveniently. [31]

2.2.5 DLsite: Global Reach with Translators Unite

DLsite, managed by EISYS, Inc., is a Japanese digital distribution platform established in 1996. It offers different digital content, such as doujinshi, games, digital manga, and light novels. By 2022, it had over 9 million users worldwide. [32]

In 2021, DLsite launched the "Translators Unite" service to support translators in translating Japanese works into multiple languages, enhancing global reach. The service allows translators to earn a percentage of sales ranging from 20% to 80% or work on a commission basis of 100 JPY per page. Native speakers review translations to ensure high quality, and only those meeting the standards are released. Multiple translations for the same work are allowed and displayed from the highest rating to the lowest, ensuring that the most popular works are the most visible. [33] The service also offers a volunteer translation option, allowing translators to choose not to receive any monetary compensation for their work. In this case, a "Volunteer" tag appears next to the translator's name on the product page, and all proceeds that would have gone to the translator are instead directed to the original creator, thereby supporting the artistic community. [34]

Through Translators Unite, DLsite seeks to reduce the spread of pirated works

and foster an environment where authors, translators, and their audiences can all enjoy and benefit from their creations. This initiative strengthens DLsite's position as a major hub for Japanese digital content, offering new opportunities for translators and creators. [35]

2.2.6 Trancy: AI Subtitle Translation Extension for Language Learning

Trancy is a language learning tool that uses AI technologies to provide bilingual subtitles on popular video platforms. It is a browser extension and supports major video platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, Disney+, Udemy, Coursera, TED, and many others. This tool allows users to translate subtitles into different languages for educational purposes, turning video content into personalized study materials with features like multiple viewing modes, interactive video-watching experiences, and various reading patterns. By focusing on understanding language structure, building vocabulary, and improving grammar, Trancy makes language learning more engaging. It also offers multiple practice modes, including listening and speaking exercises and tools to create custom learning decks. Trancy's future plans include developing mobile applications, supporting more streaming and music sites, and converting podcast content into educational materials, providing a comprehensive and flexible learning environment. [36]

Chapter 3

Design

3.1. The Methodology of Design Thinking

Design thinking is an innovative methodology for problem-solving that focuses on the user and their needs. This methodology combines empathy with users and creative thinking to find practical and innovative solutions. The term was first coined in the title of the 1987 book, "Design Thinking" by Peter Rowe, who later became the dean of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. To Peter Rowe, "Design Thinking" referred to the "situational logic and the decision-making process of designers." [37]

Design thinking consists of five stages: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test. The process begins with a deep understanding of the users' needs and problems through direct communication through interviews and observation. Then, the collected data and information are analyzed to define the problem and formulate a problem statement. After that, a wide range of potential ideas and solutions are generated through brainstorming sessions and other creative thinking techniques, followed by creating simple and quick prototypes of innovative ideas for testing and improvement. Finally, the prototypes are used with users to get feedback and evaluate the effectiveness of the solutions, allowing for adjustments and improvements based on the experience. [38]

This research will use Stanford d.school's design thinking framework as the primary methodology. [38] This framework includes five steps: first, gathering insights and a deep understanding of users' and stakeholders' needs through the empathize stage; second, accurately defining the problem during the define stage;

third, generating innovative ideas and solutions in the ideate stage; fourth, creating testable prototype during the prototype stage; and finally, testing the prototype with users and gathering feedback to refine and improve the solutions in the test stage. This methodology will help identify the needs of users and stakeholders, analyze the problem, find and design the appropriate solution, and test it systematically and effectively.

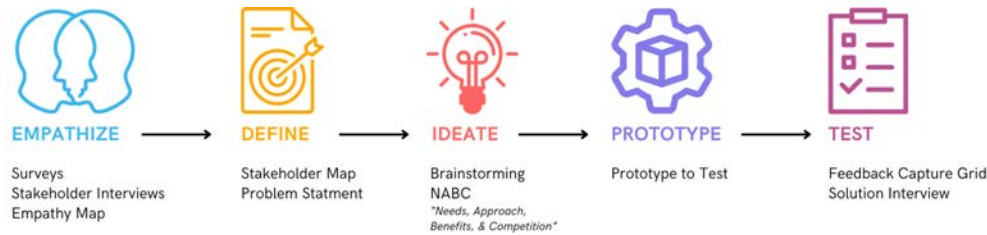


Figure 3.1 Design Thinking Framework

3.2. Empathize: Understanding User Needs

In the empathize stage of the design thinking methodology, the focus was on understanding the needs and preferences of users through various approaches. Two surveys were conducted, one with Arabic-speaking fans and another with Arabic-speaking fansubbers, to identify their preferences and needs and gain a deeper understanding of their behaviors. Additionally, interviews were conducted with different stakeholders, including fans, fansubbers, distributors or streaming services, and intellectual property holders, to explore the field and understand the diverse perspectives of each party. These interviews explored different parties' relationships, problems, and potential solutions. Based on this data, an empathy map was created to summarize what users hear, think, and feel, what they see, what they do and say, as well as the pain they experience and the gains they seek.

3.2.1 Surveys

Two primary surveys were conducted during the empathize stage. The first targeted Arabic-speaking anime fans to understand their habits and preferences, while the second focused on Arabic-speaking fansubbers to identify their needs

and behaviors. These surveys focused on the Arabic-speaking anime community, providing a detailed case study that can be generalized to a broader audience due to the difficulty of conducting surveys on a global scale. The aim was to collect detailed data to contribute to designing a new model for legalizing fansubbing and combating piracy.

Fans Survey

In the following, the results of the survey conducted with fans will be presented. The survey included 503 participants and aimed to gather comprehensive data on their anime-watching habits, subtitle preferences, use of official and unofficial platforms, and opinions on the legality of fansubbing.

Fans Watching Behaviors

The vast majority of participants have been watching anime for a long time, with about 58% having watched anime for 10 years or more. Additionally, approximately 97% of fans prefer watching anime in its original Japanese audio.

In terms of the mediums used for watching anime, about 89% of participants rely on piracy websites and apps, while around 41% use official streaming services. Furthermore, around 26% of fans watch anime in cinemas, and about 19% use social networking services. The least used mediums include chat apps' channels and groups, DVD/Blu-ray discs, TV channels, and other means, highlighting the dominance of modern streaming services for their ease of access and use.

Regarding the timing of watching anime episodes, about 46% watch it whenever they can, 25% watch episodes as soon as possible after the Japanese release, and 21% watch within hours or a day of the release. Although the majority watches whenever they can, the combined percentage of those who watch as soon as possible after the Japanese release or within hours or a day equals those who watch whenever they can. This indicates a strong preference for not waiting too long, as only about 8% wait until the entire season is released.

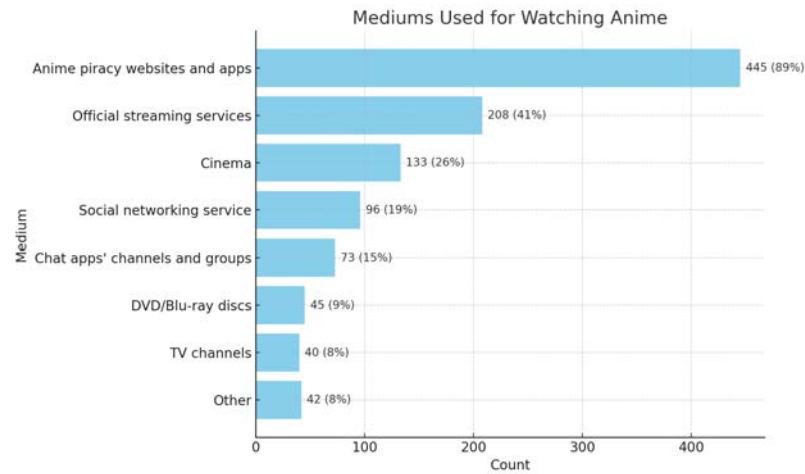


Figure 3.2 Mediums Used for Watching Anime

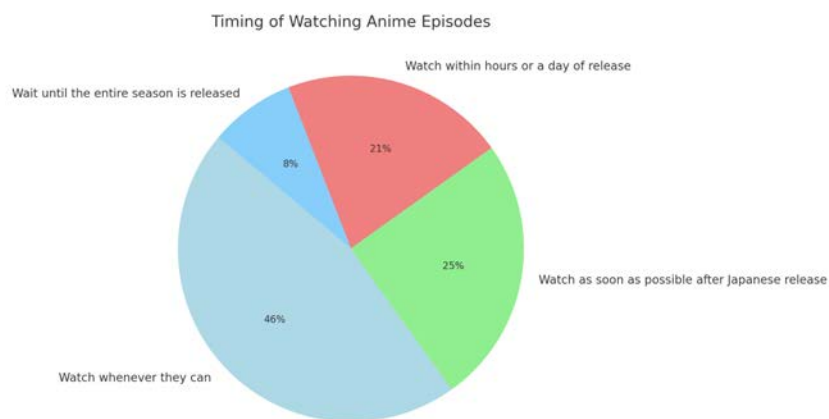


Figure 3.3 Timing of Watching Anime Episodes

Fans Use of Official and Unofficial Mediums

When asked about the type of medium they usually use to watch anime, about 51% of participants rely on both official and unofficial mediums, while approximately 43% depend on unofficial and illegal mediums such as piracy. Around 6% of participants use official and legal mediums.

Regarding the number of official streaming services they subscribe to, 41% subscribe to one or two services, while 28% subscribe to three or four services. About 24% of participants do not subscribe to any official streaming services, and 7% subscribe to five or more services.

In terms of user behavior in sharing their subscription accounts, 34% of participants have accounts they do not share, while 30% share their accounts with others. About 23% do not have accounts on any official streaming services, and 13% use accounts shared with them.

When discussing preferred models for streaming services, 60% of participants prefer subscriptions without ads, while 24% prefer free with ads. About 8% prefer discounted subscriptions with fewer ads, and another 8% prefer pay-per-view.

Regarding the mediums used to watch anime while traveling for tourism, study, or work, 67% resort to unofficial and illegal mediums, while 30% use global official streaming services. About 3% use local official streaming services.

Finally, 74% of participants face difficulties with the availability of Arabic subtitles while traveling, which leads them to watch anime through unofficial mediums. In contrast, 20% do not face this issue as their favorite anime is available on global streaming services with Arabic subtitles, and 6% face this issue but still use official streaming services.

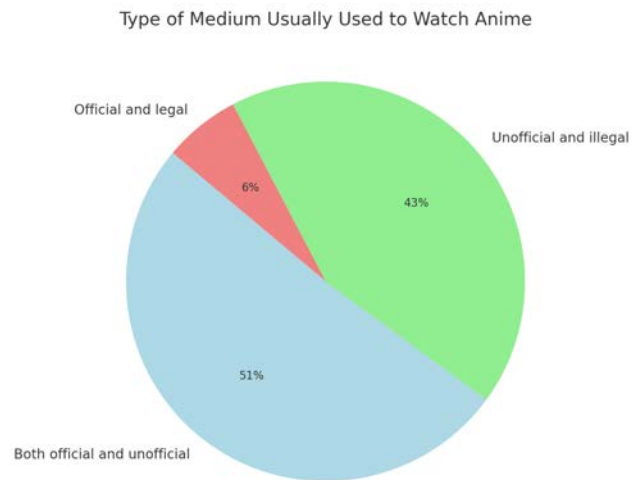


Figure 3.4 Type of Medium Usually Used to Watch Anime

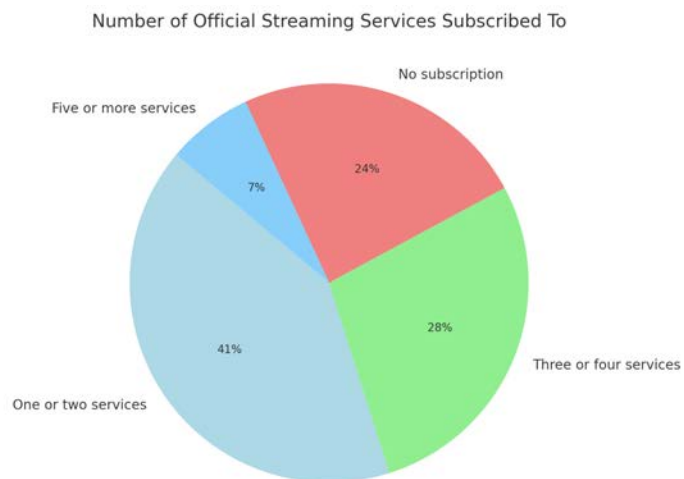


Figure 3.5 Number of Official Streaming Services Subscribed To

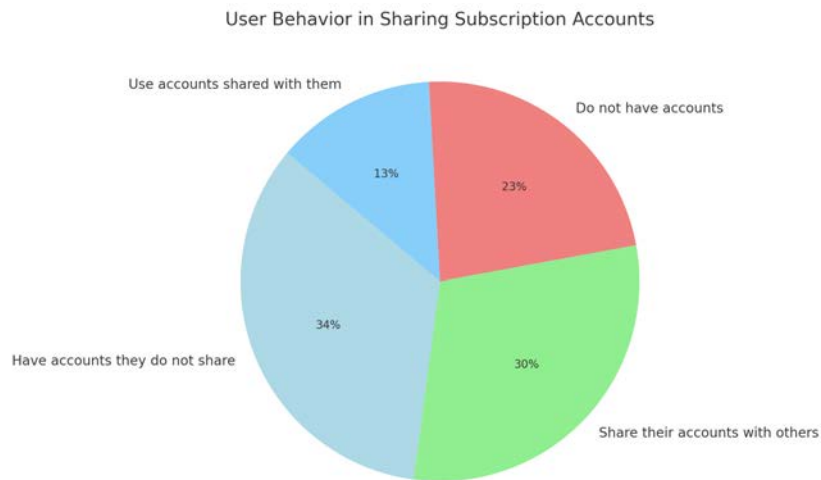


Figure 3.6 User Behavior in Sharing Subscription Accounts

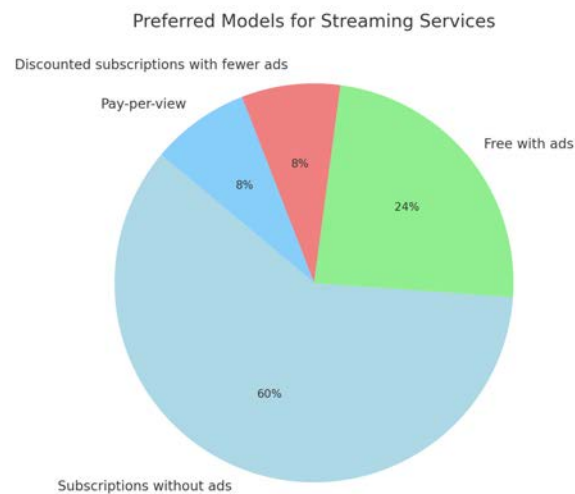


Figure 3.7 Preferred Models for Streaming Services

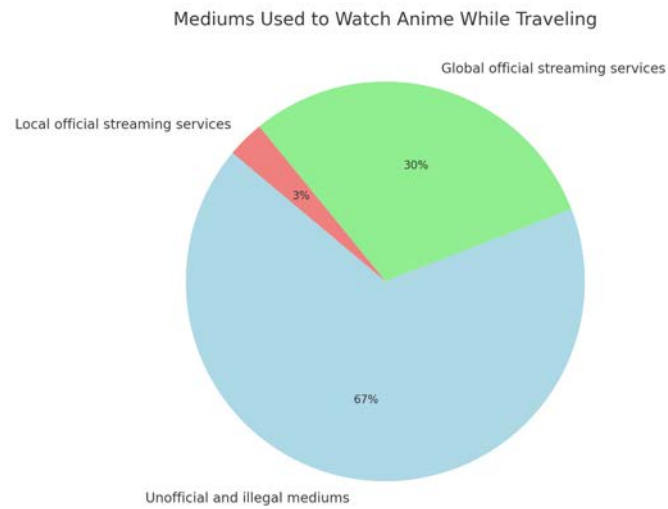


Figure 3.8 Mediums Used to Watch Anime While Traveling

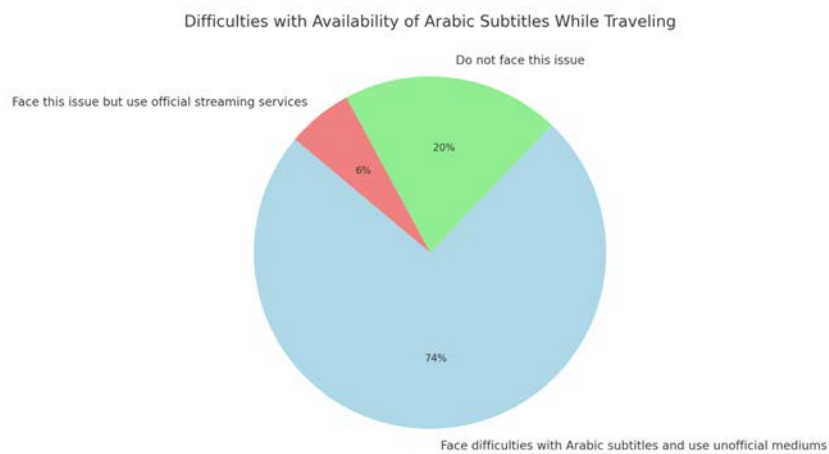


Figure 3.9 Difficulties with Availability of Arabic Subtitles While Traveling

Fans Subtitle Preferences

Most participants prefer Arabic subtitles, with 91% favoring them, while 9% prefer English or French subtitles. Regarding the type of subtitles, 41% of participants choose the best available option between official subtitles and fansubs, 21% have no specific preference, 20% prefer official subtitles, and 18% prefer fansubs.

When asked about their behavior if they are subscribed to an official streaming service but the official subtitle is delayed, 63% indicated they watch the episode with fansubs and do not rewatch it with the official subtitle. Meanwhile, 21% wait for the official subtitle to be available, and 16% watch the episode with fansubs but rewatch it with the official subtitle.

A deeper look into the data shows that among those who subscribe to official streaming services but find a fansub when the official subtitle is delayed, 64% of those who use both official and unofficial sources watch the episode with fansubs and do not rewatch it with the official subtitle, compared to only 15% of those who use only official and legal sources. On the other hand, just 19% of those who use both official and unofficial sources wait for the official subtitle to be available, whereas 67% of those who use only official and legal sources wait for the official subtitle.

Regarding the quality of fansubs, 55% of participants wait for a better quality fansub if the first available one is not good, 17% watch it but rewatch later with a better fansub, 16% watch it as soon as possible regardless of quality, and 12% prefer to watch only official subtitles.

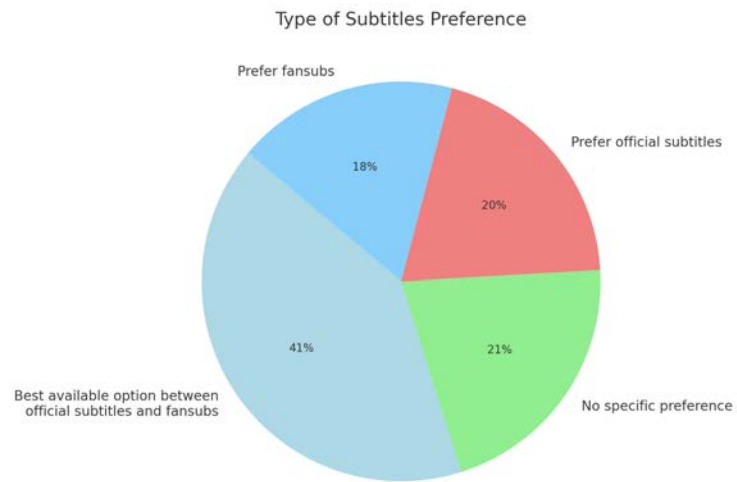


Figure 3.10 Type of Subtitles Preference

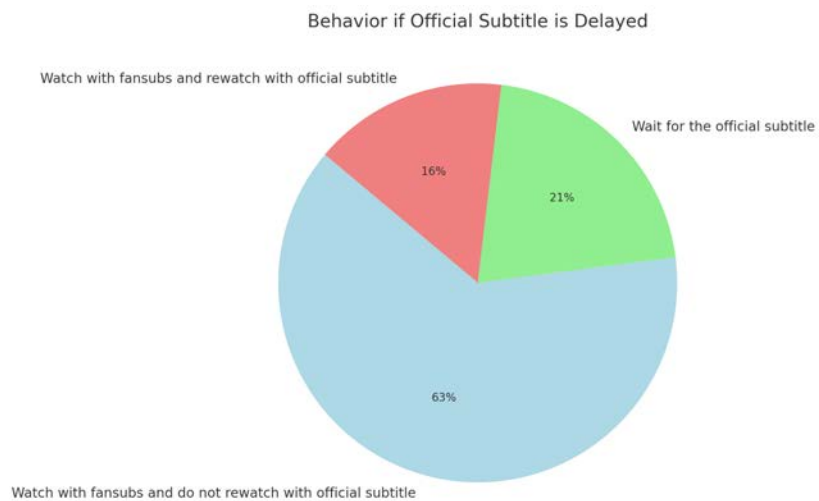


Figure 3.11 Behavior if Official Subtitle is Delayed

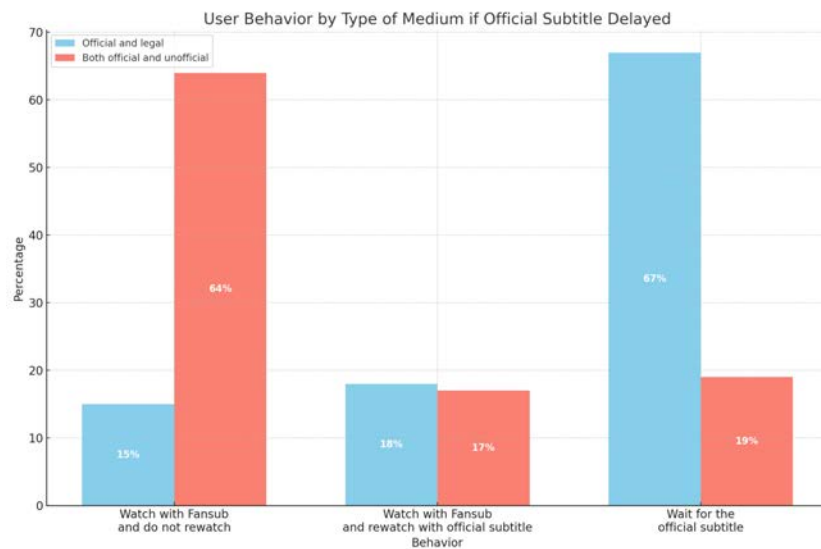


Figure 3.12 User Behavior by Type of Medium if Official Subtitle Delayed

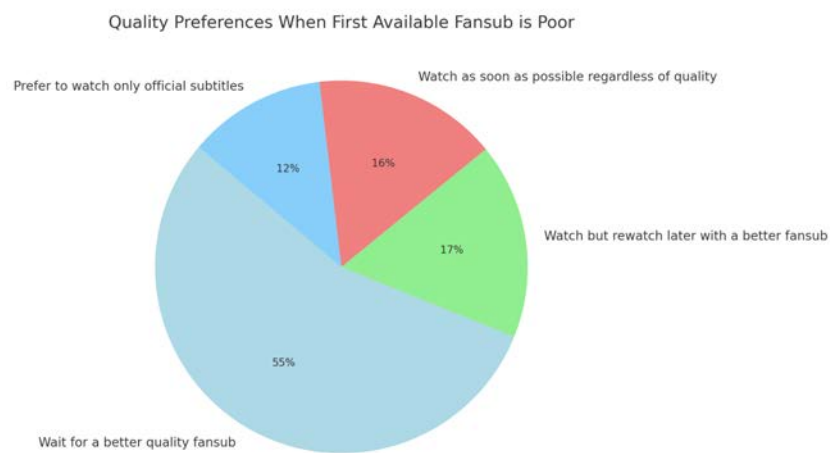


Figure 3.13 Quality Preferences When First Available Fansub is Poor

When evaluating the quality of official subtitles versus fansubs, 58% rated the quality of official subtitles as high, while 42% rated it as low. For fansubs, 80% rated the quality as high, and 20% rated it as low.

Regarding the perception of official subtitles, 43% consider them official and approved by intellectual property holders, 25% think specialized and professional subtitlers do them, 21% think they adhere to audiovisual translation rules, and 11% believe they use localization to suit the local culture.

For the perception of fansubs, 28% believe they are closer to anime fans because fans do them, 27% think fans can choose the best from multiple subtitles, 23% think fansubs are characterized by spontaneity and freedom from official rules, and 22% believe they adhere to the original meanings of Japanese culture.

Finally, when asked about where they get anime fansubs, 66% of participants obtain them from piracy websites, 58% from fansub blogs, 44% from social networking services, 17% from chat apps' channels and groups, and 4% from other sources.

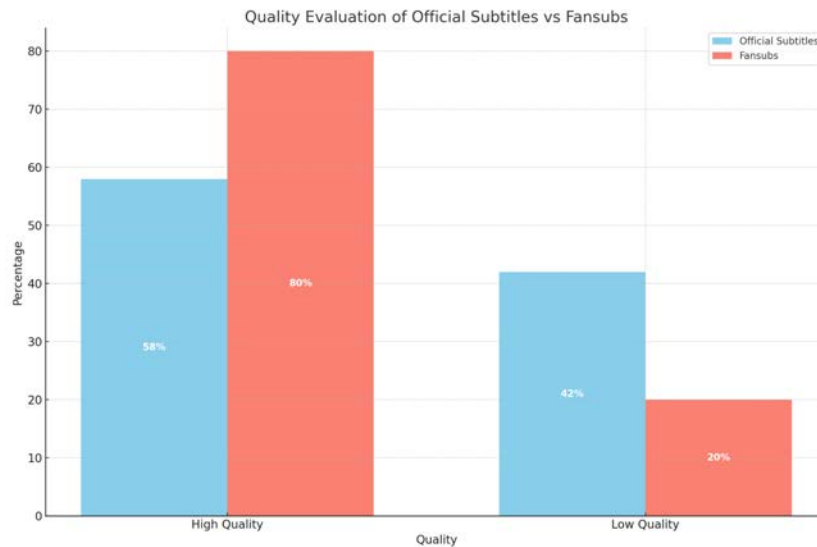


Figure 3.14 Quality Evaluation of Official Subtitles vs Fansubs

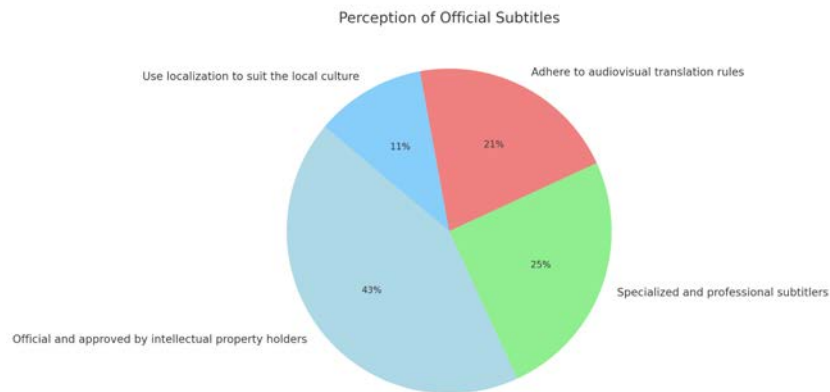


Figure 3.15 Perception of Official Subtitles

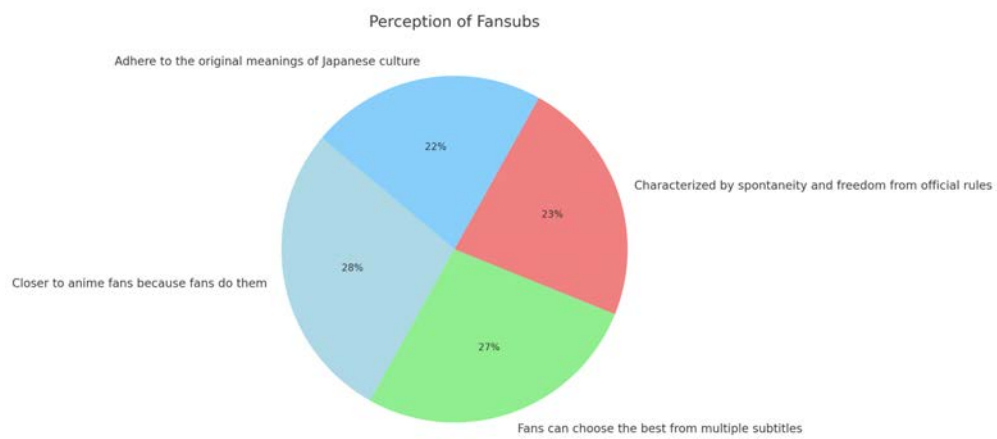


Figure 3.16 Perception of Fansubs

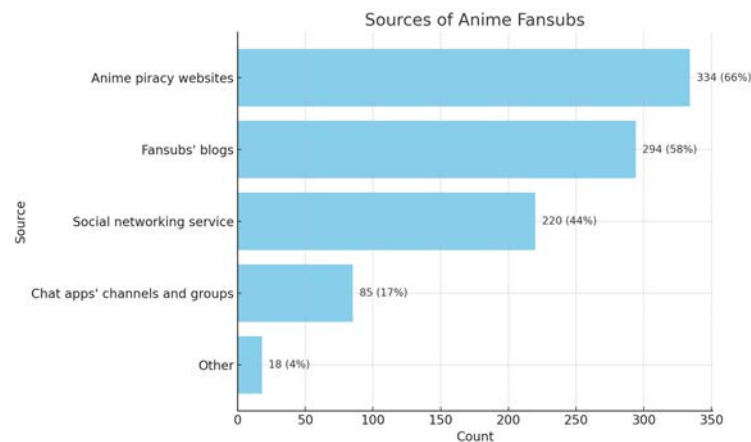


Figure 3.17 Sources of Anime Fansubs

Fans' Views on Fansub Legality

When asked about their opinion on fansubs not being recognized as legal, 68% of participants disagreed with the illegality of fansubs, 20% were unaware that fansubs are not legal, and 12% agreed with the current legal status.

For those who disagreed with the illegality of fansubs, opinions were divided on how to handle the situation: 51% believed that fansubs should remain free and active with no changes, while 49% supported regulating fansubs through official services.

Regarding their thoughts on unofficial pirated anime sites and apps, 56% of participants acknowledged that they are harmful to the industry but necessary due to the lack of alternatives, 31% saw no problem with them and believed anime should be free, 8% had no issue with sites that only provide subtitle files, and 5% thought they are harmful and should be shut down.

In response to the question of what they would do if fansubs were legalized, 38% would watch the better subtitle of the two, 36% said they would watch fansubs because they are better than official subtitles, 22% indicated that it would make no difference to them and they would watch both, and 4% would not watch fansubs and prefer official subtitles.

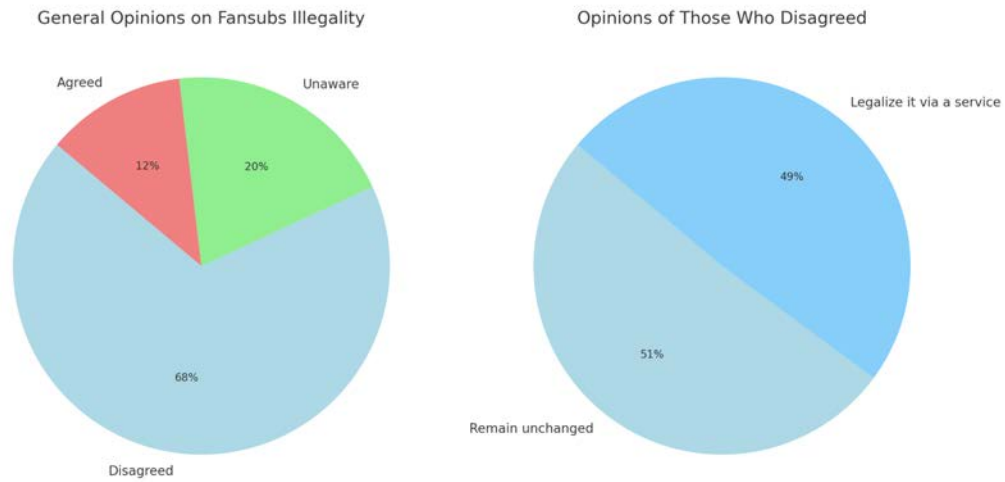


Figure 3.18 Opinion on Fansubs not Being Recognized as Legal

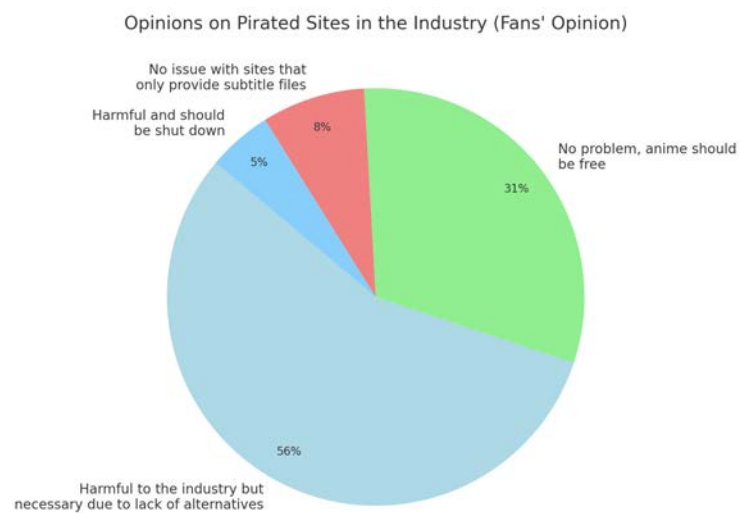


Figure 3.19 Opinion on Pirated Sites in the Industry (Fans' Opinion)

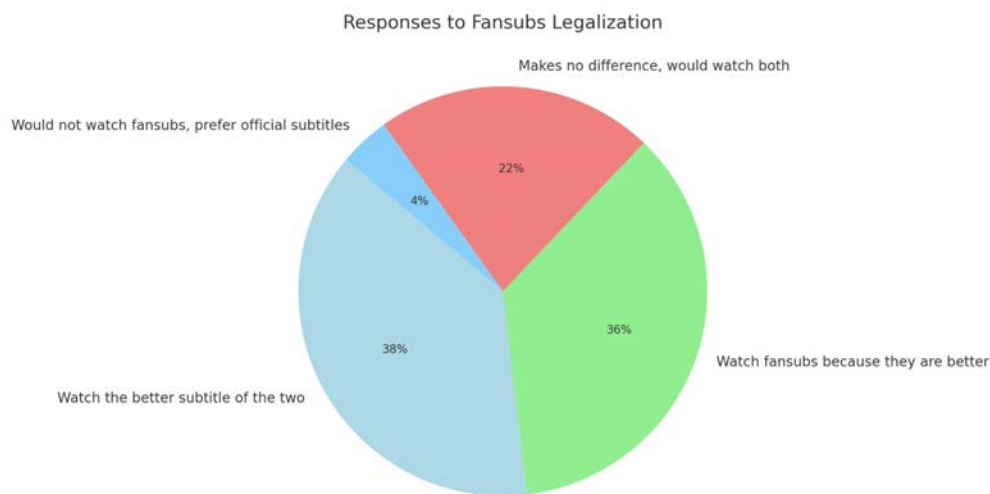


Figure 3.20 Responses to Fansubs Legalization

Fans' Opinions on How to Make Anime Fansubbing Legal

In the survey, fans were asked an open question to gather their opinions on how anime fansubbing could become legal without harming the industry. Fans responded that the quality of fansub translations is often higher than official translations due to their deep understanding of Japanese culture and language. They suggested that official platforms should employ fansubbers to improve the quality and accuracy of translations, making them more suitable for viewers. They also highlighted the need for multiple subtitle options on official platforms to cater to different audience preferences.

Additionally, fans pointed out the financial challenges of subscribing to multiple platforms to watch anime legally. They proposed the creation of unified platforms that provide access to a comprehensive library of anime titles at reasonable subscription fees. By integrating fansub translations and acknowledging their contributions, official platforms can enhance the viewing experience and support the sustainability of the anime industry.

In conclusion, fans emphasized the importance of collaboration between official platforms and fansubbers to ensure the provision of high-quality and comprehensive translations to the audience, thereby enhancing the sustainability of fan-subbed anime and making it more legal.

Fansubbers Survey

The following will present the results of the survey conducted with fansubbers. The survey included 31 participants and aimed to gather comprehensive data on their educational background, experience, motivations for subtitling, publishing methods, interaction with fans, opinions on the differences between official subtitles and fansubs, and the impact of piracy sites.

Educational Background and Experience of Fansubbers

By analyzing the educational and professional background of fansubbers, it is evident that 87% of participants do not have specialized education in translation, while only 13% do. Additionally, 45% of participants work in other fields and do not currently work in translation, while 32% are unemployed, 20% work as full-time translators, and 3% used to work as translators but are not currently employed in that role. This indicates that translation is often a hobby rather than a formal profession.

However, the results show that fansubbers have gained significant experience through long-term and continuous involvement in this activity. For instance, 58% of participants have more than five years of experience in subtitling, reflecting a long-term commitment to this activity. In contrast, 19% have two to three years of experience, 16% have four to five years, and 7% have one year or less of experience. The data also shows that 48% of participants subtitle weekly, 32% subtitle daily, 10% subtitle monthly, and 10% do not subtitle frequently, indicating a regular commitment to this activity.

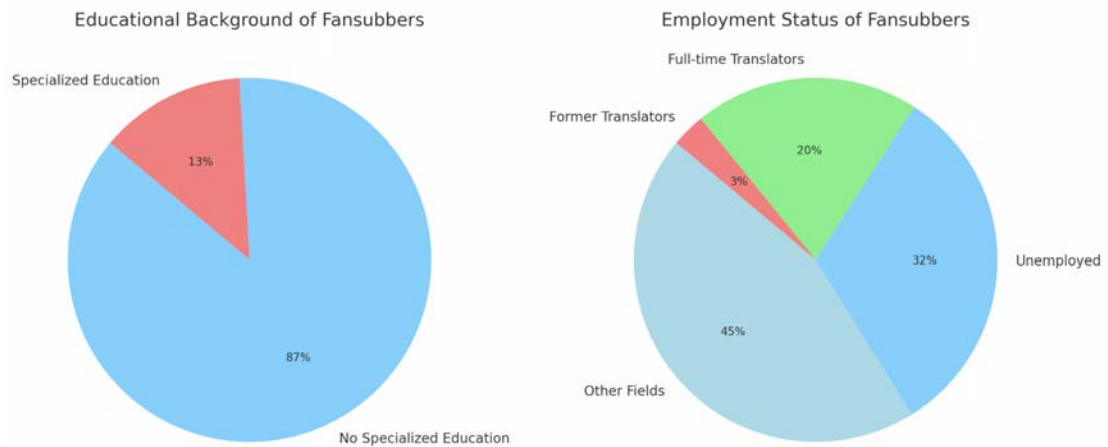


Figure 3.21 Educational Background and Employment Status of Fansubbers

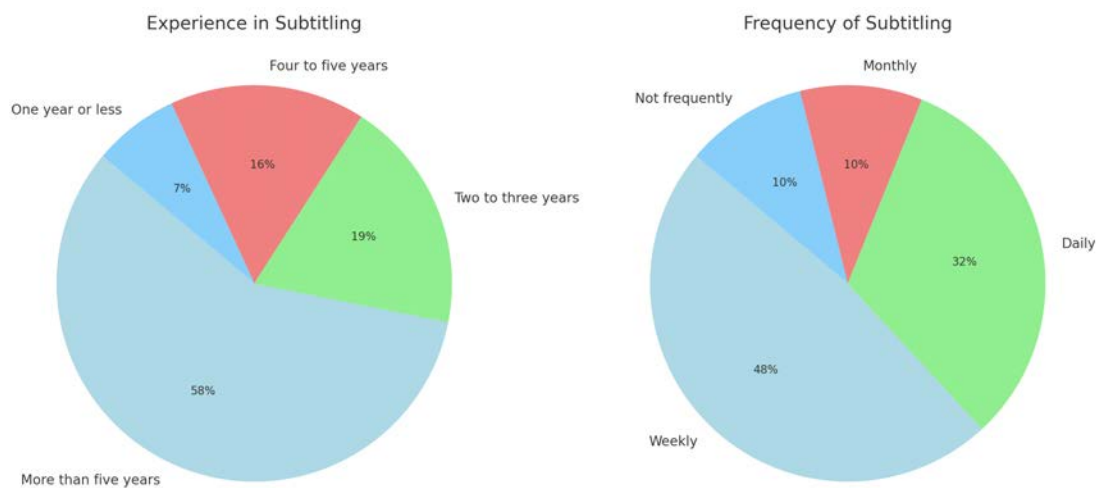


Figure 3.22 Experience and Frequency of Subtitling

Fansubbers Motivations Despite Streaming Services' Availability

The results indicate that the motivations for engaging in fansubbing are diverse. About 81% of participants view fansubbing as a means to practice a hobby, while 52% use fansubbing to enhance their language skills. Additionally, 48% of participants want to promote the anime they love, reflecting a personal passion and engagement in this activity. Moreover, 48% consider official subtitles to be of poor quality, 29% want to meet the needs of fans, 29% see subtitling as a way to join the fansubbing community, 19% view it as a source of income, and 6% have other motivations.

Despite the availability of official streaming services, 65% of participants continue to be fansubbers because the anime they subtitle has yet to be officially available. Meanwhile, 36% continue subtitling because they love this hobby, even with the presence of these services. Additionally, 36% continue due to the perceived poor quality of official subtitles, reflecting a strong belief that official subtitles do not adequately meet fan needs. Furthermore, 3% continue to provide a free alternative for fans.

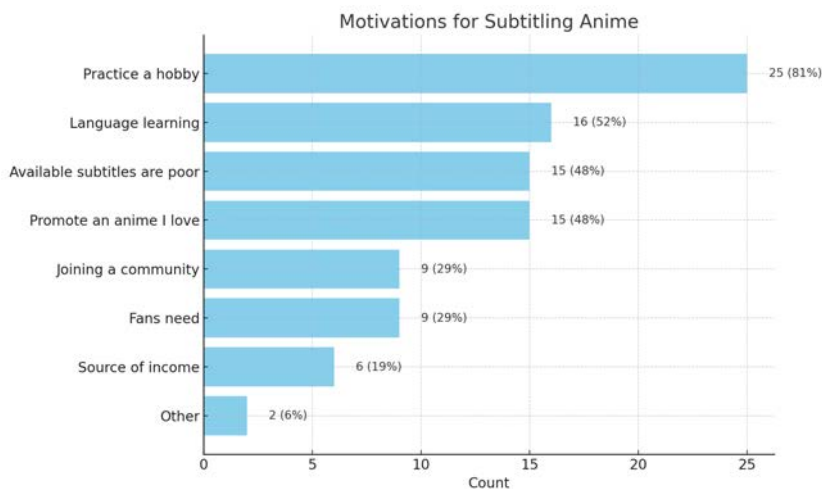


Figure 3.23 Motivations for Subtitling Anime

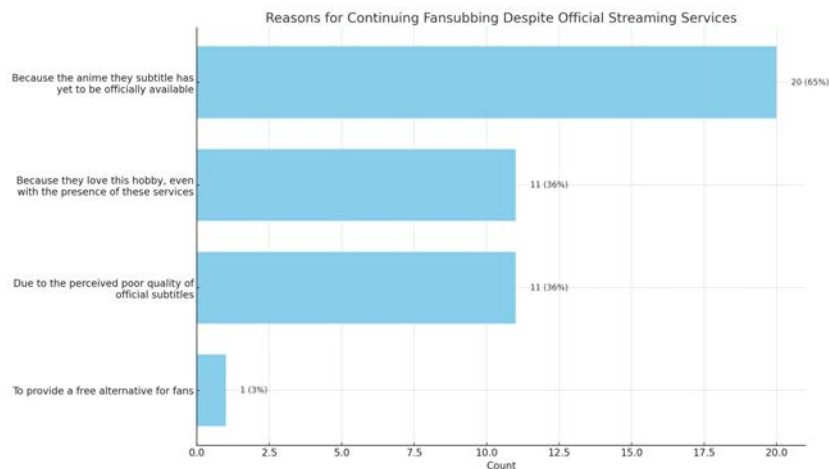


Figure 3.24 Reasons of Continuing Fansubbing Despite Official Streaming Services

Work Mechanism, Publishing, and Interaction with Fans

Most fansubbers rely on reference texts for their subtitling process. About 61% rely on English or French reference subtitles, 29% subtitle based on the written Japanese script, and 10% subtitle directly from Japanese without a written script. Although most fansubbers rely on reference texts in languages other than Japanese, they believe that familiarity with Japanese culture is important, with 58% stating that it is extremely important and 42% considering it quite important.

Regarding publishing platforms, 71% of fansubbers publish their work on their personal blogs, 48% publish on team blogs or websites, 42% use social network services to reach a wider audience, and 3% publish on unofficial piracy sites. Additionally, 97% of participants do not use ads or monetization on their platforms, while 3% do.

In terms of how subtitles are published, 71% of fansubbers publish subtitle files both separately (soft-sub) and with burned-in subtitles (hard-sub), 26% publish subtitle files separately only (soft-sub), and 3% publish video files with burned-in subtitles only (hard-sub). As for subtitle file formats, 90% publish in ASS format, 7% do not publish subtitle files, and 3% publish in SRT format.

Interaction with fans is an important part of the fansubbing process. About 97% of participants communicate with fans via social network services, 32% rely on

comments on their websites, 3% communicate via email, and 3% do not interact with fans. This highlights the importance of direct and continuous interaction with the audience. Fansubbers are keen on receiving suggestions to improve their subtitles, with 55% emphasizing the significance of this interaction, alongside discussions about anime episodes as mentioned by 52%, continuous error correction as noted by 45%, and anime recommendations to subtitle as seen by 26%.

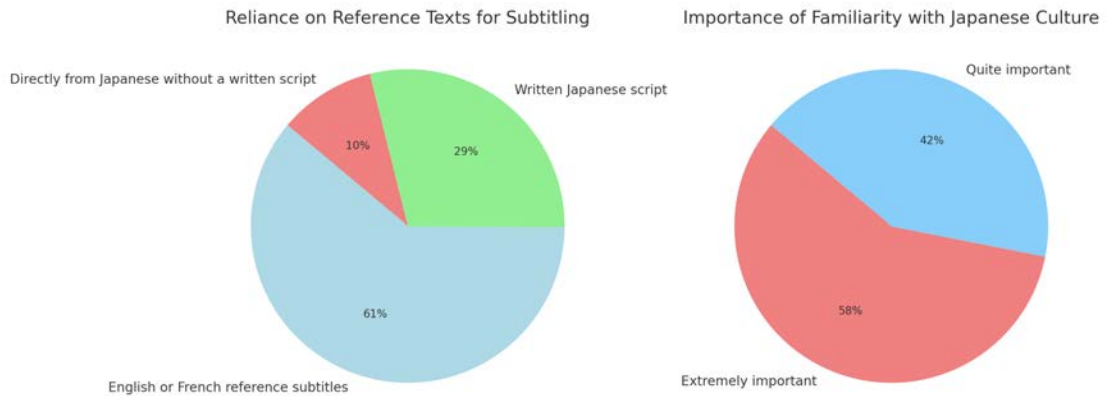


Figure 3.25 Reference Texts for Subtitling and Familiarity with Japanese Culture

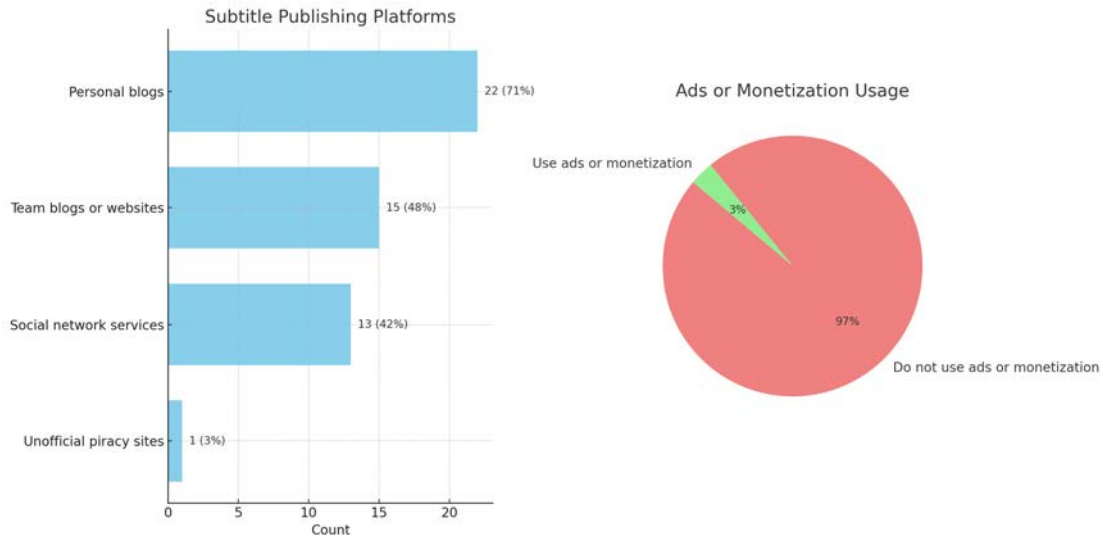


Figure 3.26 Subtitle Publishing Platforms and Ads or Monetization Usage

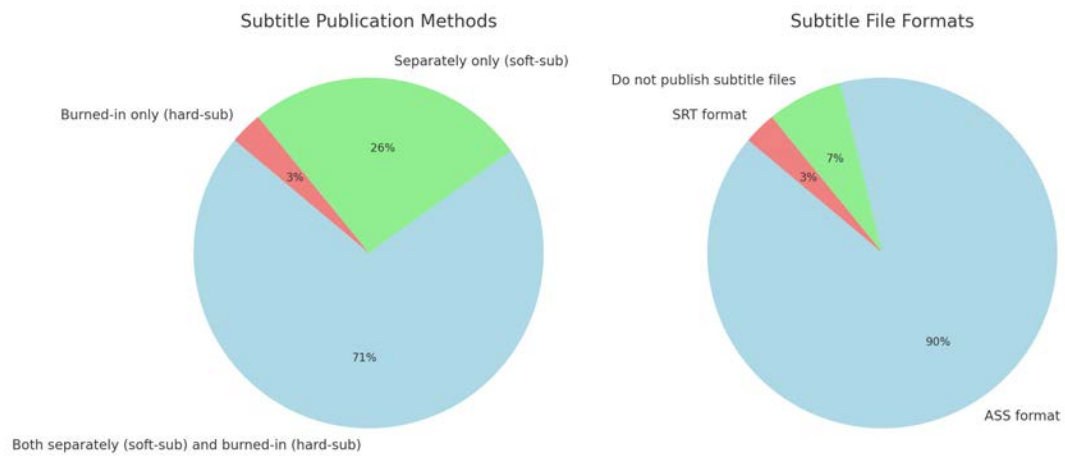


Figure 3.27 Subtitle Publication Methods and File Formats

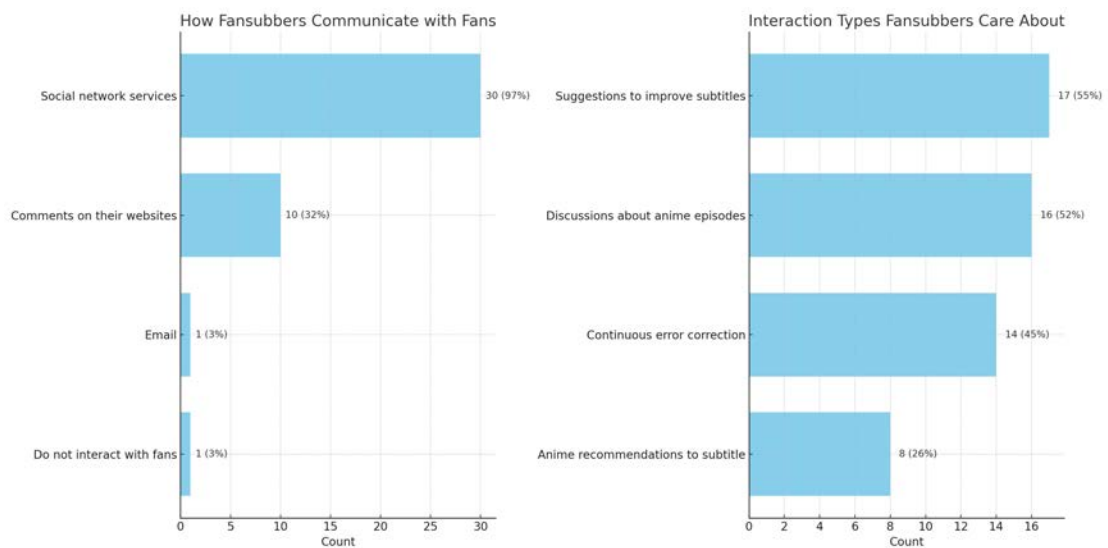


Figure 3.28 How Fansubbers Communicate with Fans and Interaction Types

Official Subtitles, Fansubs, and Piracy Sites

The vast majority of participants, 78%, believe that fansubs are better than official subtitles, while 6% think official subtitles are better, 6% see no difference between them, and 10% have no opinion. This reflects significant confidence in the quality of their work compared to official subtitles. Regarding legality, 55% of participants believe that fansubbing is legal only if the subtitle file is provided without pirating videos, while 22% think it is legal only if no official subtitles are available, 13% consider it illegal in all cases, and 10% believe it is legal in all situations.

Concerning unofficial websites that collect fansubs and stream them with ads, 58% of participants do not support these sites but acknowledge that nothing protects their copyrights, 36% do not mind as long as their name is not removed, and they do not care about money, and 6% cooperate with these sites voluntarily without any compensation. Regarding unauthorized use of their subtitles, 29% of fansubbers have never had their subtitles stolen, while 26% had their subtitles stolen with their names removed, 26% had their subtitles stolen without name removal, and 19% had their work attributed to someone else.

Finally, 51% of participants believe that pirated sites and apps are harmful to the industry but necessary due to the lack of alternatives, 23% see no problem with these sites and apps, considering anime should be free, 23% do not mind if these sites provide only subtitle files, and 3% believe they should be shut down due to their harm to the industry regardless of the reasons. This reflects ongoing challenges and a division in views on the impact of these sites and apps on the industry.

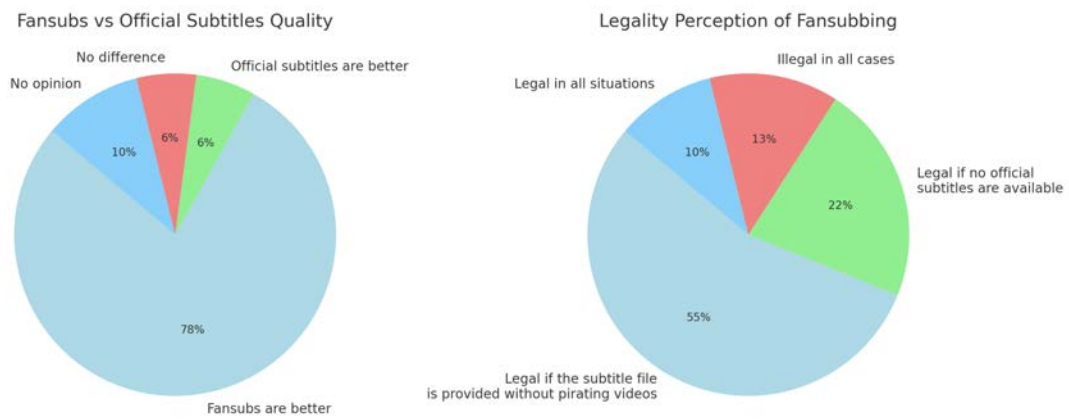


Figure 3.29 Fansubs vs Official Subtitles Quality and Legality of Fansubbing

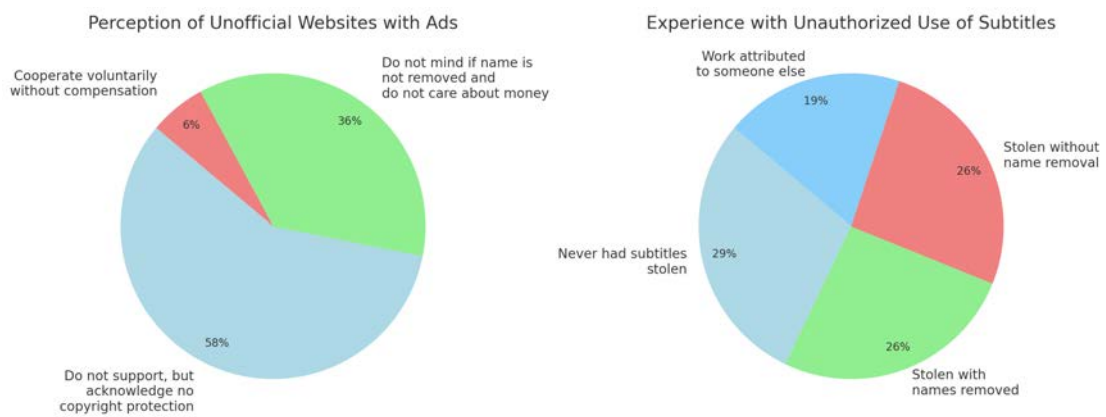


Figure 3.30 Perception of Unofficial Websites and Unauthorized Use of Fansubs

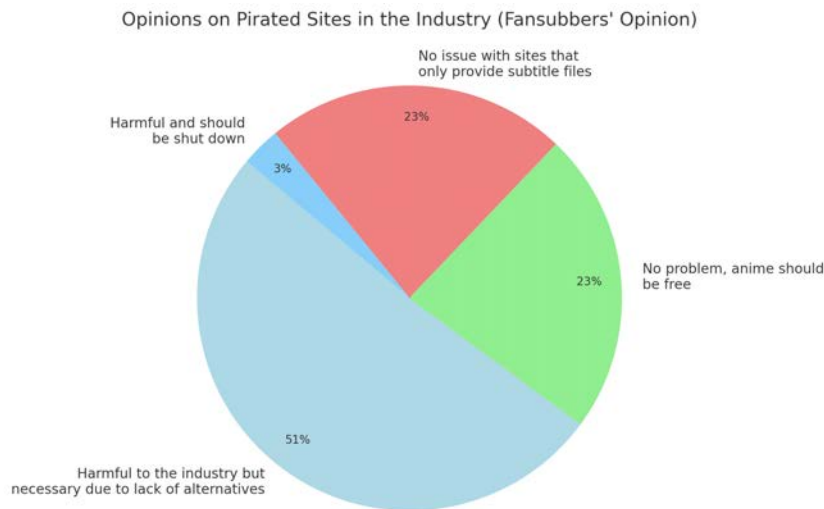


Figure 3.31 Opinion on Pirated Sites in the Industry (Fansubbers' Opinion)

Fansubbers' Opinions on How to Make Anime Fansubbing Legal

An open question was posed to fansubbers in the survey to gather their opinions on how anime fansubbing could become legal without harming the industry. Fansubbers responded that making anime fansubbing legal requires providing them with income and increasing awareness of intellectual property rights. They suggest that official platforms should purchase the rights to their subtitles and integrate them after quality checks, offering both free and paid subtitle services to out-compete piracy. They also emphasize the importance of recognizing the role of fansubs in popularizing anime, urging official platforms to collaborate with them to create a sustainable environment.

Fansubbers also offered tips to improve fansubbing practices, such as focusing on linguistic accuracy and creative subtitles and ensuring continuous subtitle updates to maintain accuracy and incorporate necessary corrections or improvements. They stressed the importance of using soft-sub because it allows for future edits without the need to re-encode the video. Additionally, they highlighted the need to educate the anime community about the importance of high-quality subtitles and avoid relying on random subtitles. Fansubbers pointed out that financial

challenges make it difficult for viewers to legally pay for multiple subscriptions to watch anime, as not everyone can subscribe to every official streaming service.

These insights reflect fansubbers' dedication to improving the legal and subtitled environment for anime, emphasizing the need for strategies that support fansubbers' rights and provide high-quality content for viewers.

3.2.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in the anime industry, including intellectual property holders, streaming services, fansubbers, and fans. These interviews aimed to understand their perspectives on licensing and distribution for streaming services, fansubs, and piracy.

Intellectual Property Holders

Two prominent Japanese companies in the anime industry were interviewed, referred to as "IP Holder 1" and "IP Holder 2". IP Holder 1 focuses on pitching their projects to major global streaming services such as Netflix, Prime Video, Crunchyroll, and Bilibili before production begins to secure funding through exclusive licensing when necessary. In contrast, IP Holder 2 sets licensing fees based on factors such as the license duration, the platform's services, and whether the license is exclusive, preferring to distribute through multiple platforms to reach a wider audience.

In cases where there is no platform to license anime works in a particular region, IP Holder 1 ensures that they start anime production once they confirm the interest of a global streaming service in obtaining the license and funding the production. On the other hand, IP Holder 2 expresses the need to find a way to legally provide anime to viewers in these regions. IP Holder 2 also emphasizes that working with multiple platforms helps increase exposure and financial returns, allowing them to reach a broader and more diverse audience. Therefore, they prefer to work with platforms that offer the best distribution terms and help spread anime more widely.

IP Holder 1 faces challenges in licensing and providing rights to platforms, not-

ing that the lack of automation in communication between rights holders and platforms leads to delays in approvals due to multiple levels of partners and production committees involved. Similarly, IP Holder 2 faces challenges related to licensing fees and the ability to ensure transparency of reliable tracking data when structuring a revenue-sharing deal.

Regarding fansubbing, IP Holder 1 appreciates the love fans have for anime through their unofficial subtitles but fears their impact on piracy and leaves interactions with them to distributors if they wish to collaborate with them. Meanwhile, IP Holder 2 believes that fansubbers can be beneficial for anime content but prefers leaving the subtitles management to streaming services or distributors to ensure high and consistent quality. Nonetheless, IP Holder 1 thinks working with fansubbing teams to provide subtitles directly to viewers on official streaming services could be an exciting experiment if quality and accuracy are guaranteed. IP Holder 2 is not currently considering this option but does not mind if it helps spread anime content legally and under the supervision of official streaming services.

In terms of piracy, IP Holder 1 believes it does not directly affect them as international distributors pay upfront before production. However, it may impact distributors in the long run, making them reluctant to invest in anime, which affects funding and production. They clarify that the presence of piracy reduces the demand for paid legal services, negatively impacting future financial returns. Meanwhile, IP Holder 2 views piracy as selfish and believes it should be addressed by creating a new system that redirects funds lost due to piracy to the rights holders to ensure the industry's sustainability.

Streaming Services

Two streaming services were interviewed, referred to as "Streaming Service 1" and "Streaming Service 2". Streaming Service 1 is a local platform in Saudi Arabia. While Streaming Service 2 is a global platform covering various regions worldwide. Streaming Service 1 seeks to obtain anime rights through direct contact with Japanese rights holders via email or attending exhibitions, and the process is usually smooth despite some delays in obtaining materials or promotional ap-

provals, which need to be solved. Meanwhile, Streaming Service 2 relies on joining production committees or acquiring rights early, ensuring new titles are exclusively available on their platform.

Regarding subtitling on streaming services, Streaming Service 1 collaborates with freelance translators and university interns to provide high-quality subtitles that meet audience expectations. In contrast, Streaming Service 2 employs specialized staff for each region and collaborates with freelancers, many of whom work as fansubbers, when needed, ensuring subtitle quality and suitability for the target audience.

Streaming Service 1 believes fansubbers possess valuable skills and see the potential for collaboration as freelancers. However, Streaming Service 2 thinks fansubbers might encourage piracy but also help reach audiences in minor regions. Streaming Service 1 addresses piracy by reporting illegal sites to authorities and enhancing service security. In contrast, Streaming Service 2 acknowledges that combating piracy is challenging but believes improving services can reduce reliance on unofficial sites.

Fansubbers

Two fansubbers were interviewed, referred to as "Fansubber 1" and "Fansubber 2". Fansubber 1 works with Crunchyroll after they opened job opportunities to many in the fansubbing community, allowing them to turn their hobby into a stable profession, contributing to high-quality subtitles for viewers. Fansubber 1 believes that legally organizing fansubbers can enhance subtitle quality and reduce piracy issues. They think having a legal framework governing fansubber activities would help improve quality and ensure adherence to professional standards. Fansubber 2 works independently but collaborates with teams when needed. They also believe that official platforms need to improve subtitles and hire more subtitlers with deep cultural knowledge of Japan. They explain that working independently offers more freedom but lacks the resources and support available in organized teams.

Fansubber 1 thinks the difference between official subtitles and fansubs lies in the flexibility and creativity fansubbers have, allowing them to add explanatory

headnotes and provide more accurate translations that better reflect Japanese culture. Fansubber 2 believes fansubbers have a deep understanding of anime and Japanese culture, making their subtitles often more detailed and interactive.

Fansubber 1 feels that official platforms often lack the flexibility that fansubbers enjoy, affecting the accuracy and quality of translations. Fansubber 2 explains that the difference between official subtitles and fansubs is the dedication and passion fansubbers bring, excelling in delivering subtitles that accurately capture the details of anime and the essence of Japanese culture.

Fans

Two anime fans were interviewed, referred to as "Fan 1" and "Fan 2." Fan 1 relies on their friend's Crunchyroll account and sometimes watches on Netflix via their account. If the anime is unavailable on these streaming services, they turn to fansubbers. They may prefer fansubs for some shows even if they are available on streaming services because they find fansubs better, even if it means waiting. On the other hand, Fan 2 uses their brother's Crunchyroll account and sometimes watches anime through pirated sites and apps due to the lack of official availability on streaming services. Although they prefer subscription services, they resort to pirated sites, which often have annoying ads and lower quality.

Fan 1 believes that the availability of anime varies across streaming services, which complements each other but also creates a new problem of difficulty in subscribing to all these services. They find that annoying ads on unofficial platforms ruin the experience and make accessing content difficult, while Crunchyroll does not have these annoying ads and is faster and easier to use. However, they prefer fansubs if they were easier to access, but note that they often come with many annoying ads and sometimes require downloading subtitles and videos separately, which requires more effort compared to streaming services where they can start watching their favorite anime with just a click. Fan 2, on the other hand, sees that official platforms are starting to monopolize the market. If they continue to provide good services that meet the fans' expectations, that's great; otherwise, fans will turn to pirated options that are available for free. Regardless, fans will prefer the service that best meets their needs, whether it is free or paid.

Fan 1 prefers fansubs over official subtitles because they believe that official subtitles could be inconsistent and varied in style and terminology, as multiple people might work on the same project. Fansubs, on the other hand, are consistent in style and terminology. They appreciate the additional context provided by fansubbers through explanatory headnotes, which enhance their understanding and enjoyment of the anime. Fan 2 finds that fansubs are of varying quality due to the lack of a quality standard and the existence of multiple subtitles for the same work without a standard for evaluation, making it challenging to find the best subtitle. Although they appreciate their efforts, they feel that the added comments and headnotes can be distracting and prefer if they were hideable.



Figure 3.32 Example of Headnotes that Explain Some Terms in Detail

Fan 1 wants to improve the viewing experience by lowering prices and utilizing fansubbers because their subtitles are preferred. They believe incorporating fansub elements, such as cultural explanations and detailed headnotes, would significantly enhance official subtitles. They also suggest creating an official platform for fansubbers to facilitate access to legal content and reduce reliance on pirated sites. Fan 2, on the other hand, wishes to reduce ads and improve the quality of subtitles. They suggest that if there is a platform that allows fansubs, it should include features to edit subtitles or add corrective notes and suggestions. Additionally, Fan 2 is interested in having classic old anime content available in high quality on a single platform and making it accessible to fansubbers, as there is a

lack of legal availability on official streaming services, with piracy being the only way to watch them.

3.2.3 Empathy Map

As part of the design thinking methodology in the empathize stage, and after conducting surveys and interviews with various stakeholders, in addition to observations from exploring anime communities on social network services, current streaming services, and piracy sites, the results of this stage were gathered in the following empathy map.

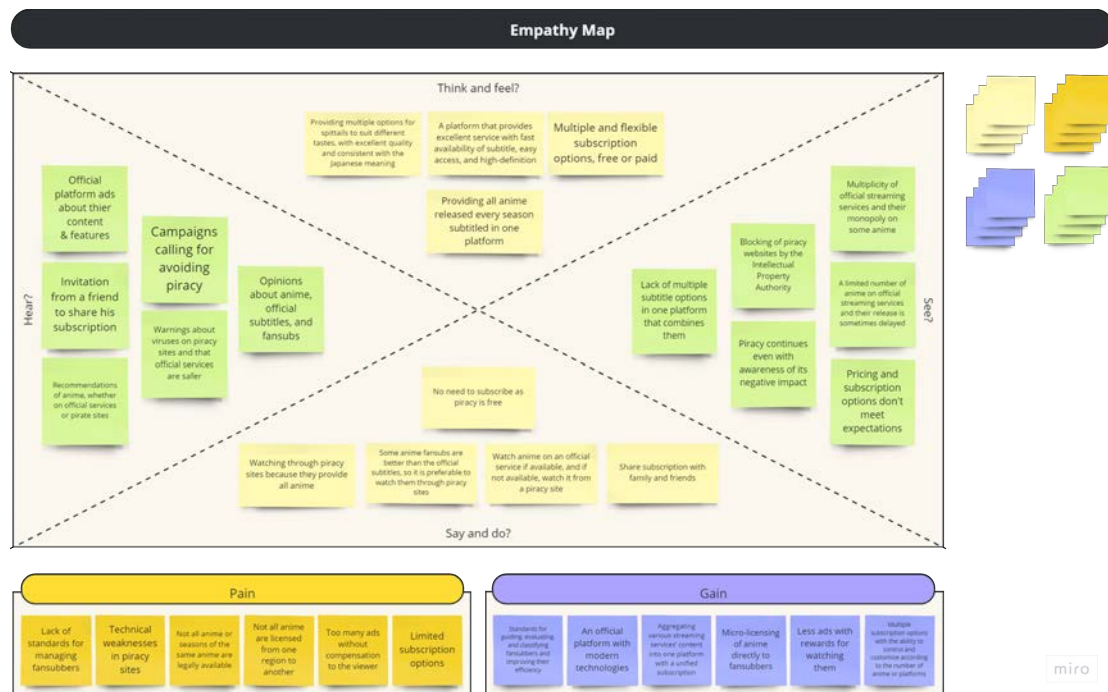


Figure 3.33 Empathy Map

Think and Feel: Users desire multiple subtitle options to suit different tastes, with excellent quality and consistency with the Japanese meaning. They prefer a platform that offers excellent service, including fast subtitles availability, easy access, and high-definition quality. Additionally, they wish for a platform that provides all the anime released every season, subtitled in one place, with multiple and flexible subscription options, whether free or paid.

See: Users observe the variety of official streaming services and their monopoly on some anime. They also noticed that the Intellectual Property Authority is blocking piracy websites. Despite this, piracy continues even with awareness of its negative impact. Users sometimes suffer from a limited number of anime available on official streaming services and delays in their release. Furthermore, pricing and subscription options do not meet their expectations.

Hear: Users hear about advertisements from official platforms about their content and features and invitations from friends to share their subscriptions. They also hear campaigns calling to avoid piracy and warnings about viruses on piracy sites, emphasizing that official services are safer. Additionally, they exchange opinions about anime, official subtitles, and fansubs, along with recommendations about anime, whether on official services or piracy sites.

Say and Do: Some users see no need to subscribe to official services because piracy is free and provides all anime. They prefer watching anime through piracy sites because some fansubs are better than the official subtitles. However, if anime is available on an official service, they watch it there, and if not, they watch it from a piracy site. They also share their subscriptions with family and friends.

Pain: The pain points include the lack of standards for managing fansubbers, technical weaknesses in piracy sites, and not all anime or seasons being legally available. Additionally, not all anime is licensed from one region to another. There are too many ads without compensation to the viewer and limited subscription options.

Gain: Users desire standards for guiding, evaluating, and classifying fansubbers to improve efficiency. They aspire for an official platform with modern technologies that aggregate content from various streaming services into one place with a unified subscription. They prefer micro-licensing anime directly to fansubbers, fewer ads with rewards for watching them, and multiple subscription options with the ability to control and customize according to the number of anime or platforms.

This map provides a comprehensive illustration of the empathize stage in the design thinking methodology, highlighting users' needs and aspirations that should be considered in developing new and innovative solutions.

3.3. Define: Identifying Core Problem

In the define stage of the design thinking methodology, the insights gained from the empathize stage are synthesized to identify the core problem. This involves organizing and analyzing data collected through surveys, interviews, and observations to uncover significant patterns and themes. The goal is to understand the root causes of users' issues and formulate a precise and actionable problem statement. In this stage, stakeholders are identified and defined, and the problem statement is articulated. This problem statement is a foundation for subsequent stages, guiding the creative thinking and solution development processes effectively, ensuring a focus on solving the right problem.

3.3.1 Stakeholder Map

To reach a suitable solution for legalizing fansubbing and combating piracy in the anime industry, the stakeholders must first be identified, and their roles clearly understood. Stakeholders are the individuals and entities who influence and are influenced by this system, each playing a crucial role in forming and developing this ecosystem.

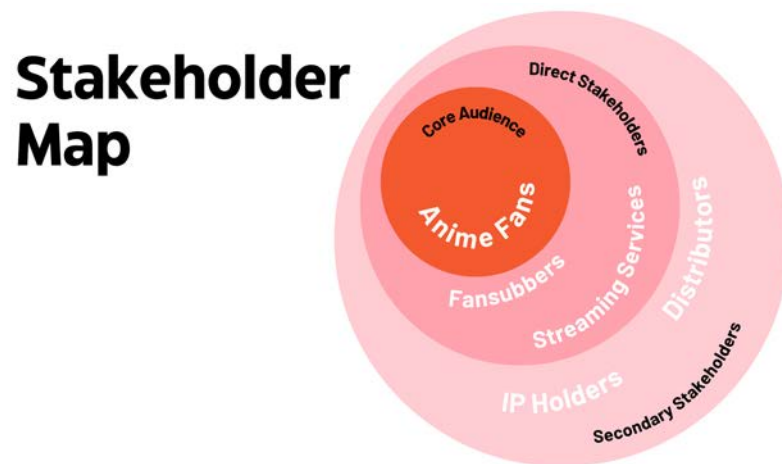


Figure 3.34 Stakeholder Map

Anime fans are the core audience in this model. These individuals watch and enjoy anime, relying on fansubbing to understand the content in their native language. Meeting their needs and expectations is essential to ensuring the success of any initiative in this field.

Fansubbers translate and subtitle anime unofficially into various languages out of their love for anime and desire to spread it within their linguistic communities. Their efforts increase access to anime and expand the fan base, but they may also pose legal challenges related to intellectual property rights.

Distributors and streaming services represent another category of direct stakeholders. This category includes companies that distribute anime online or through other media, as well as companies that stream anime online, providing viewers access to content. They play a crucial role in delivering content to the audience and meeting the growing demand for anime while protecting intellectual property rights and ensuring a legal and safe viewing experience.

Finally, **intellectual property holders**, such as publishers, production companies, and studios, own the rights to anime works. They are concerned with protecting their rights and ensuring the legal use of content. They require cooperation with other entities in the ecosystem to find solutions that protect their rights and provide legal access to content.

By identifying and defining stakeholders and understanding their needs and roles, an integrated ecosystem model can be developed that balances legalizing fansubbing and combating piracy, enhancing the anime industry, and ensuring its sustainability.

3.3.2 Problem Statement

Fansubbing for anime enables fans to enjoy anime content in their native languages. However, this practice faces significant legal and regulatory challenges. To understand these challenges and develop sustainable solutions, it is essential to identify the core problem and formulate a precise problem statement to guide future efforts.

Gabe Newell, co-founder of the Steam service, once said, "Piracy is a result of bad service." [8] Recalling this quote highlights the issues faced by official platforms that drive users toward pirate sites.



Figure 3.35 Current Model Problems

Official platforms suffer from issues such as a lack of data transparency and hidden statistics, content monopolization and selectivity, and geographical restrictions that limit access to content from certain countries. These problems push users towards illegal sites in search of alternatives.

In contrast, piracy sites offer easy access to pirated content quickly through video upload platforms and provide multiple subtitles in local languages by unofficial fansubbers, increasing their popularity. Pirates also contribute to the widespread distribution of content by illegally re-uploading and downloading it.

After analyzing these issues, the problem statement was formulated to define the problem accurately and work on finding appropriate solutions:

“Anime fans turn to fansub-powered piracy sites when their favorite anime isn’t legally available or when they prefer to watch with fansubs. This practice hurts revenue for intellectual property holders and legal streaming services. Integrating fansubbers into a new model can provide a legal, sustainable viewing experience.”

By addressing these issues and improving official services with increased transparency, offering diverse content without geographical restrictions, and collaborating with fansubbers to provide official subtitles, reliance on piracy can be reduced and the user experience legally enhanced. In the upcoming stages of design thinking, innovative solutions will be developed based on a precise understanding of user needs and current problems.

3.4. Ideate: Generating Creative Solution

In the ideate stage of the design thinking methodology, the focus shifts to generating creative solutions based on the insights and problem statement from the define stage. This involves brainstorming sessions to encourage free thinking and rapid idea generation. To refine and evaluate these ideas, the NABC (Need, Approach, Benefit, Competition) framework is used, ensuring that solutions address specific needs, propose effective methods, offer clear benefits, and stand out from competitors. This structured yet creative approach paves the way for the subsequent prototype and test stages.

3.4.1 Brainstorming

In this phase, three individuals participated in brainstorming sessions to generate creative ideas for solving the identified problem. The first participant was me, a researcher with academic and professional expertise in the anime field, having worked with anime companies through the Saudi company I co-founded, specializing in localizing and distributing anime in the Arab world. The second participant was an avid anime fan who learned Japanese due to their love for anime, and they have experience as a fansubber. The third participant was a fansubber who helped

establish a database for Arab fansubbers and updated it seasonally. They have also been a member of various anime fansubbing teams.

The brainstorming sessions aimed to answer the question, "How might we legalize fansubbing activity to benefit all parties involved?" and resulted in various ideas categorized according to different stakeholders.

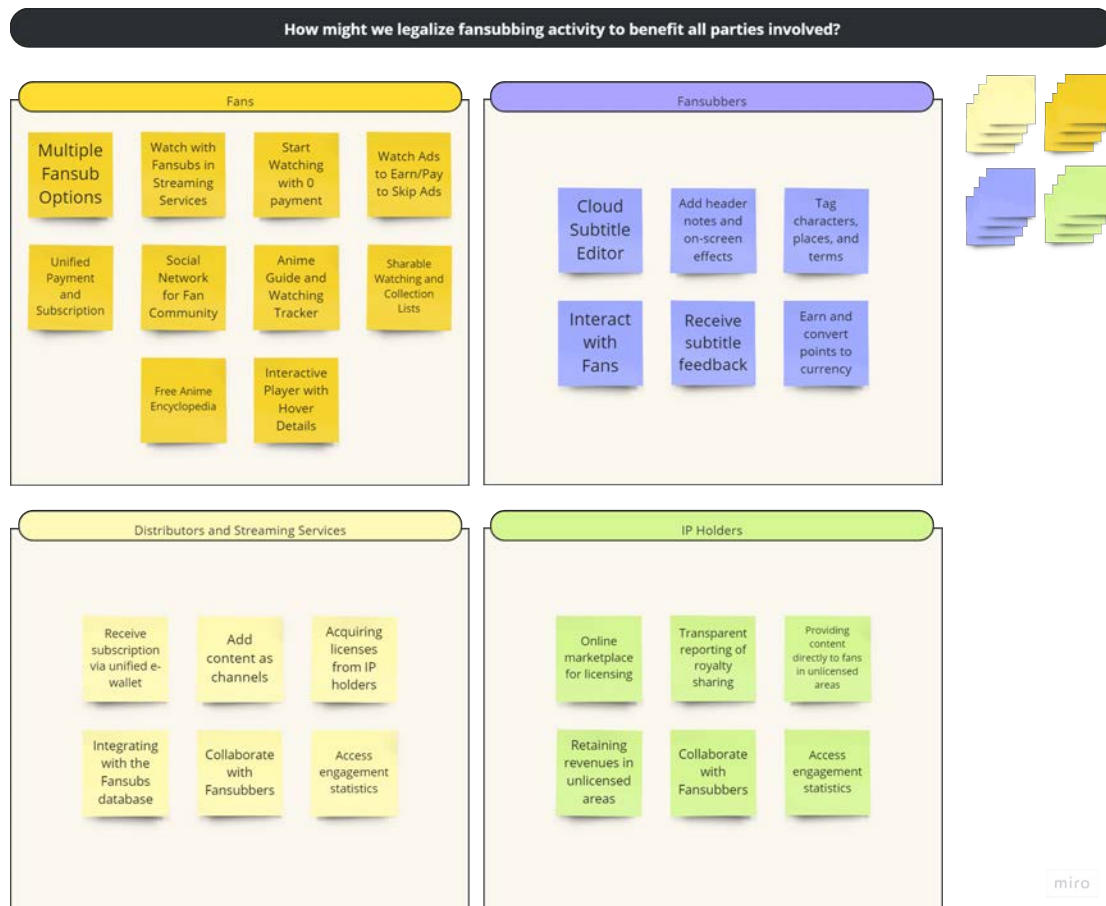


Figure 3.36 Brainstorming

Fans: The ideas focused on improving the anime viewing experience and providing flexible and distinctive options. Fans suggested offering multiple fansub options within streaming services, allowing them to watch anime with fansubs directly from the platform. They also proposed a model that starts with free viewing options with ads or the option to pay to skip ads, as well as a unified

subscription system covering all services. To enhance social interaction, the ideas included creating a social network for the fan community, an anime guide and watch tracker, watch gatherings, shareable watching and collection lists, a free anime encyclopedia, and an interactive player that displays details upon hovering.

Fansubbers: The ideas concentrated on enhancing subtitle tools and interaction with fans. They proposed a cloud subtitle editor that allows adding notes and on-screen effects, tagging characters, places, and terms, and receiving feedback from fans on subtitles. Fansubbers could also earn points that can be converted into currency, encouraging the improvement of translation quality and continuity.

Distributors and Streaming Services: The ideas aimed at improving collaboration between distributors, streaming services, and fansubbers. Suggestions included accepting subscriptions via a unified electronic wallet for anime fans, adding content as independent channels, and obtaining licenses from intellectual property holders. Additionally, the integration with the fansub database and cooperation with fansubbers were proposed, along with access to aggregated engagement statistics from various platforms.

Intellectual Property Holders: The ideas included creating an online marketplace for licensing content with transparent reporting of royalty sharing. They also suggested providing content directly to fans in unlicensed regions, allowing revenue retention in these regions. Furthermore, collaboration with fansubbers and access to aggregated engagement statistics from various platforms were proposed.

This brainstorming generated diverse ideas, which can be further developed in subsequent design thinking stages to offer innovative and sustainable solutions. Future work will build on these ideas to enhance the legal anime viewing experience, balance intellectual property rights with fan needs, and contribute to a more transparent and collaborative ecosystem in the anime industry.

3.4.2 Need, Approach, Benefit, and Competition (NABC)

The NABC framework, which focuses on Need, Approach, Benefit, and Competition, helps develop and evaluate ideas systematically. By applying this model to the issue of legalizing fansubbing, a comprehensive solution that meets the needs of all stakeholders involved can be created. Below are the results of applying the NABC framework to this problem.

Need: Anime fans need legal ways to watch their favorite anime with fansubs. Fansubbers need tools to subtitle anime legally. Streaming services lose potential subscribers due to free pirated anime with easily accessible fansubs, and intellectual property holders lose revenue to fansub-powered piracy sites that use ads without sharing royalties.

Approach: The approach involves integrating fansubbers into legal streaming services, allowing them to add fansubs to licensed anime and share revenue with streaming services and intellectual property holders. A new payment model enables fans to watch ads to earn points, which can be used to skip ads or buy products and subscriptions (Watch Ads to Earn, Pay to Skip Ads).

Benefit: Fansubbers can legally work on licensed anime in exchange for points, ensuring their efforts aren't wasted due to copyright claims. Fans will have more subtitle options and easier access to anime from intellectual property holders or licensed streaming services. This platform offers an alternative to piracy, protecting revenue for streaming services and intellectual property holders.

Competition: Anime piracy sites remain a threat if fans and fansubbers aren't convinced to use this solution. Adapting to the new model takes time, and motivating fansubbers to publish their fansubs through this platform is challenging. Accessing aggregated engagement statistics from various platforms can help understand user behavior and refine the solution.

Table 3.1 Summary of Need, Approach, Benefit, and Competition Framework

Need	Approach
• Anime fans need legal ways to watch their favorite anime with fansubs. • Fansubbers need a tool to subtitle anime legally. • Streaming services lose potential subscribers due to free pirated anime with easy-to-access fansubs. • IP holders lose revenue to fansub-powered piracy sites that use ads without sharing royalties.	• Integrating fansubbers into legal streaming services allows them to add fansubs to licensed anime and share revenue with streaming services and IP holders. • A new payment model lets fans watch ads to earn points, which they can use to skip ads or buy products and subscriptions (Watch Ads to Earn, Pay to Skip Ads).
Benefit	Competition
• Fansubbers can legally work on licensed anime in exchange for points, ensuring their efforts aren't wasted due to copyright claims. • Fans will have more subtitle options and easier access to anime from IP holders or licensed streaming services. • This platform offers an alternative to piracy, protecting revenue for streaming services and IP holders.	• Anime piracy sites remain a threat if fans and fansubbers aren't convinced to use this solution. • Adapting to the solution takes time. • Motivating fansubbers to publish their fansubs through this solution is challenging.

By addressing these aspects through the NABC framework, a legal and sustainable ecosystem for anime fansubbing can be created. This approach meets the needs of all parties involved and provides clear benefits while tackling competitive challenges, contributing to reducing reliance on piracy and enhancing the anime viewing experience for everyone.

3.5. Prototype: Designing Solution Model

In the prototype stage of the design thinking methodology, the focus shifts to creating tangible representations of the ideas generated during the ideate stage. This involves designing and building a prototype that integrates various stakeholders and enables fansubbers to work officially and legally with intellectual property holders, distributors, or streaming services. A new ecosystem model was developed for this project, and a user experience and interface design for a new streaming service named "Fanous" was created. This prototype allows users to interact with the service and provide feedback, helping to evaluate and refine the solution. This section will introduce the Fanous service, explain the new ecosystem model, detail user flow within the service, and outline the monetization model for the platform.

3.5.1 Introduction to Fanous

The current anime streaming system faces significant challenges, such as protecting intellectual property rights and viewers' reluctance to subscribe to official streaming services, driving them to piracy sites and unofficial fansub blogs. This situation leads to a loss of revenue for intellectual property holders and complicates efforts to combat piracy.

Fanous is an innovative ecosystem designed to legalize fansubbing activities for anime and combat piracy. This service integrates various stakeholders into a comprehensive model, including fansubbers, intellectual property holders, distributors, and streaming services. By offering a new model that strengthens partnerships between fansubbers, intellectual property holders, and streaming services, while implementing strict anti-piracy measures, Fanous aims to create a sustainable and

legal environment for fansubbing anime.

Therefore, Fanous provides a comprehensive solution to improve the anime viewing experience and address the industry's main issues today. By offering an integrated platform that combines legal fansubbing and streaming, Fanous users can benefit from numerous advantages, including access to diverse content and premium services, contributing to the overall improvement of the anime industry's ecosystem.

3.5.2 Fanous Branding

The name *Fanous* captures the heart of the platform's identity, combining "Fan", symbolizing anime enthusiasts, with the suffix "-ous", meaning "full of", to form the phrase *Full of Fans*—the official slogan of the service. It also connects to *fansub* (fan-made subtitles), reflecting the platform's dedication to supporting the fansubbing community by providing a space for their work. Additionally, *Fanous* is derived from an Arabic word that means "lantern". This is reflected in the logo through the use of a Japanese lantern, symbolizing the platform's focus on Japanese anime. The lantern design underscores the platform's mission to illuminate, inspire, and bring together anime fans from around the world.



Figure 3.37 Fanous Logo

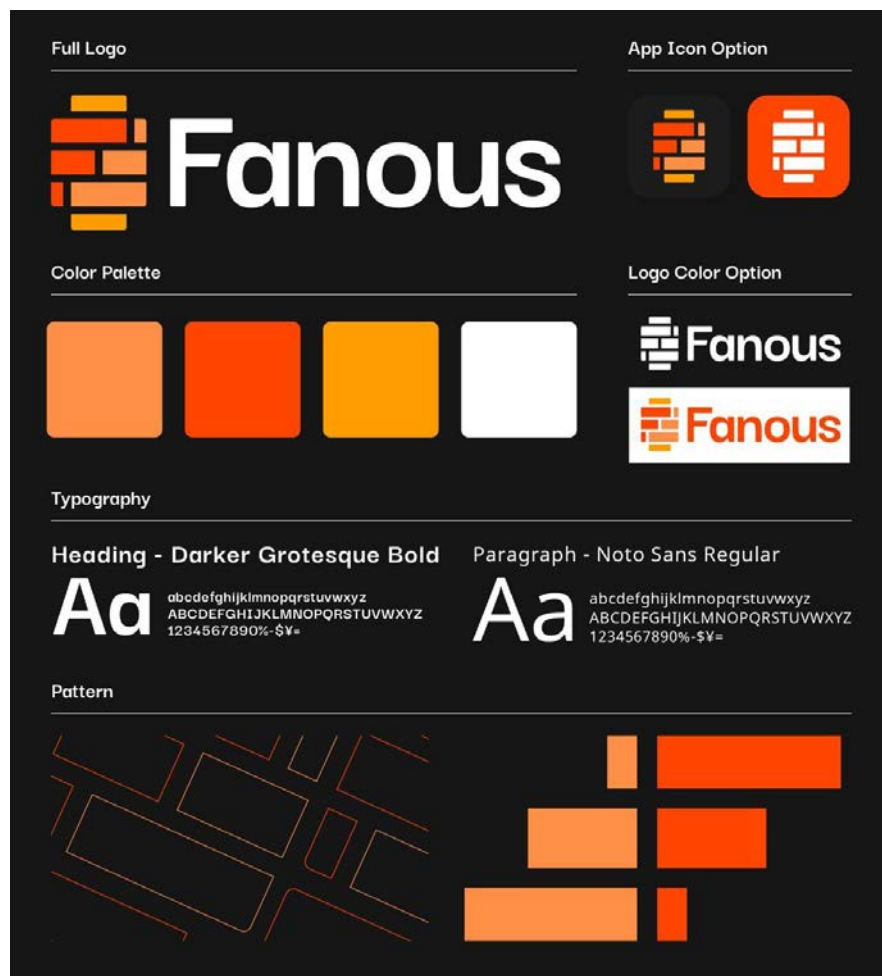


Figure 3.38 Fanous Brand Assets

3.5.3 Fanous Ecosystem

The Fanous ecosystem aims to enhance the anime viewing experience and streamline interactions among various stakeholders in the anime industry. By integrating IP holders, fansubbers, distributors, and streaming services into a unified model, Fanous seeks to create a sustainable and legal environment that enables anime distribution in innovative and profitable ways for everyone.

Figure 3.39 illustrates the initial model that shows the current anime streaming ecosystem alongside the proposed Fanous model. This initial concept was presented to stakeholders during previous stage interviews to gauge their interest and gather feedback. Based on these interactions, the final model was developed. The current model shows the flow of anime content from IP holders and production companies to international distribution companies and finally to viewers. It highlights the issues of piracy and illegal ads, demonstrating how unofficial fansub sites disrupt the legal flow and revenue sharing. The proposed Fanous model integrates fansubbers legally into the distribution chain, showing how IP holders, distribution companies, and streaming services can work together within the Fanous platform to ensure legal and profitable distribution while integrating fansubbing.

Figure 3.40 presents the final Fanous ecosystem model. It displays the comprehensive structure of the platform and how each element interacts and supports the overall system. IP holders provide licenses and media kits, ensuring the content's legality and high quality for fansubbers. Fansubbers create and upload subtitles, contributing to the platform and earning tokens. Distributors and streaming services offer anime titles and integrate fansubbed content, monitoring traffic and user engagement to identify potential licensing opportunities. Fans engage with the platform by watching anime with fansubs, earning tokens, and supporting the legal distribution of content. By integrating these elements, Fanous creates a collaborative, equitable, and legal ecosystem for fansubbing anime, enhancing the overall experience for all stakeholders involved.

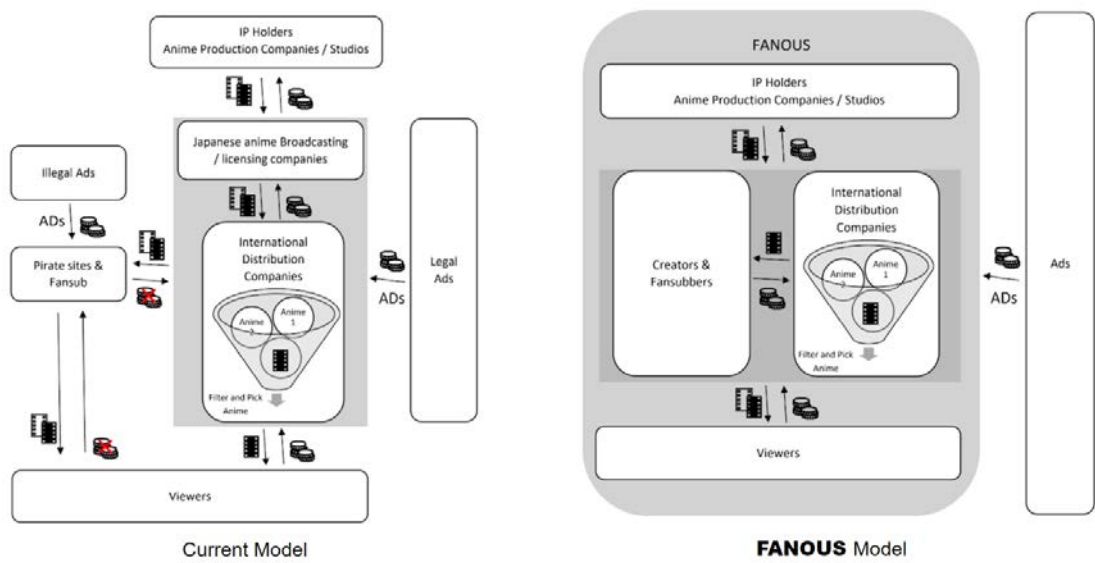


Figure 3.39 Fanous Initial Ecosystem

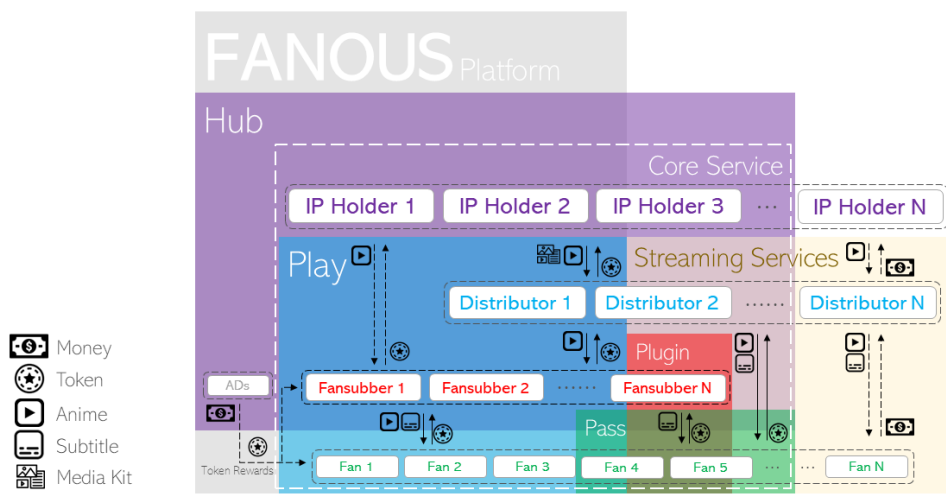


Figure 3.40 Fanous Final Ecosystem

The Fanous ecosystem consists of four main elements to improve the anime viewing experience and streamline stakeholder interactions. These elements work together to legally ensure high-quality content, promote cooperation among all parties involved, and provide everyone with a sustainable and profitable environment. These four elements are:

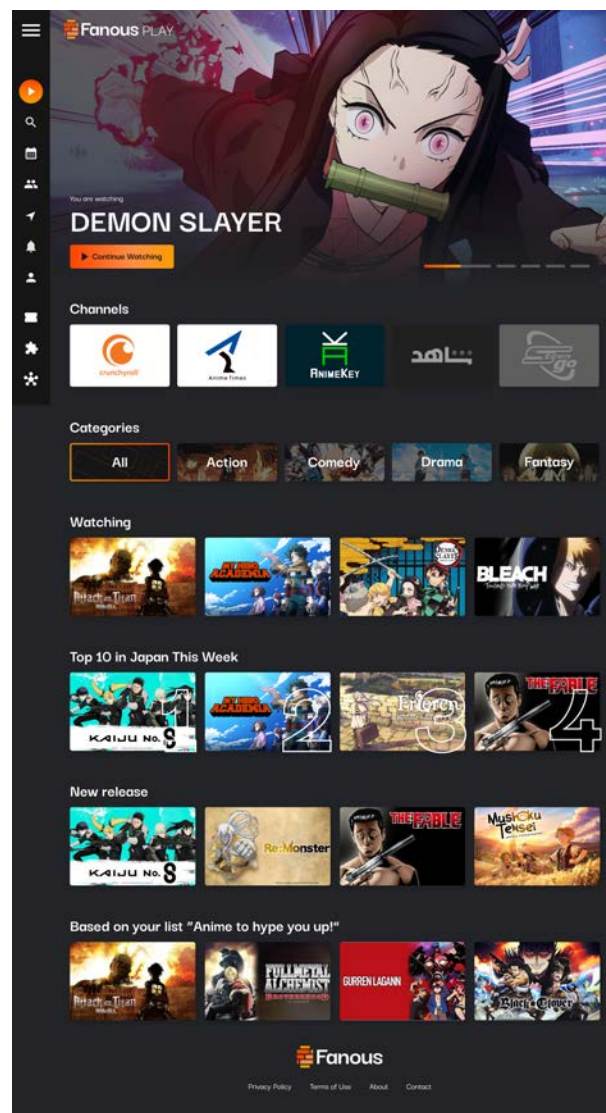


Figure 3.41 Fanous Play Home page

Play: A comprehensive anime streaming guide that aggregates titles from multiple streaming platforms and directs fans to them. It offers users a single, unified platform to access a wide range of their favorite titles from various services. Additionally, Fanous Play allows users to watch anime with fansubs through micro-licensing, ensuring fansubbers' rights and revenue sharing with intellectual property holders. If these titles become licensed by regional services, Fanous Play can hide them in that region and direct users to the official platform, ensuring continuous income for rights holders. Moreover, Fanous Play features interactive elements like a social network for anime fans, enabling interactions through reviews, notes, comments, and watch gatherings, along with an anime guide, watch tracker, shareable lists, a free anime encyclopedia (FanWiki), and an interactive player displaying details upon hovering.

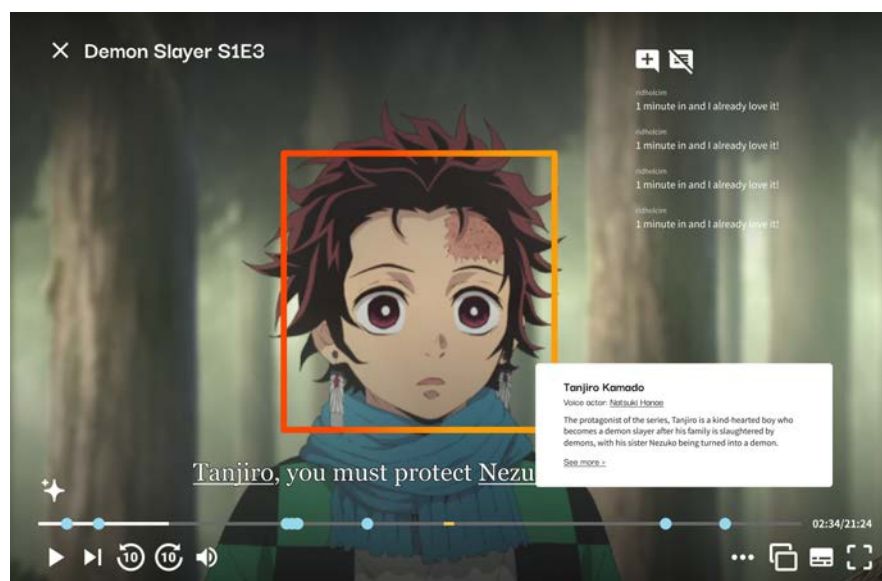


Figure 3.42 Fanous Video Player

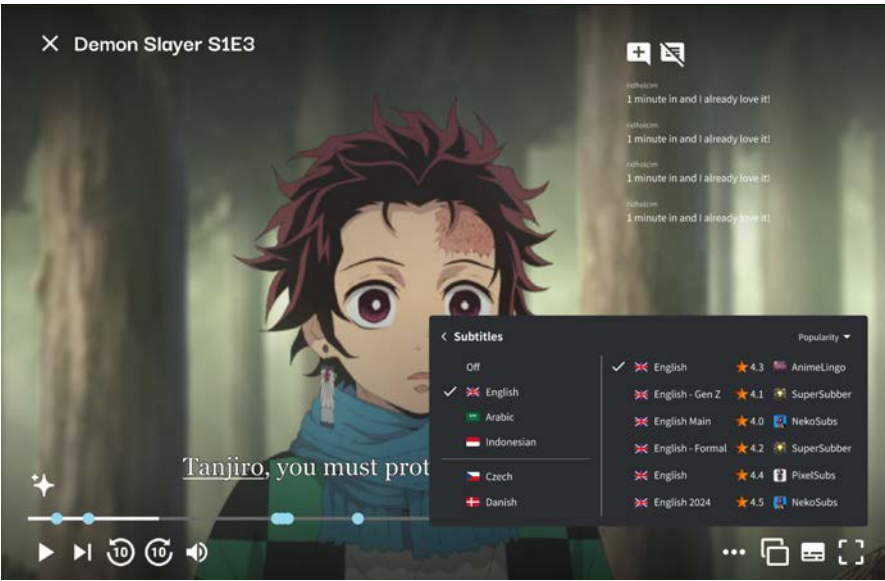


Figure 3.43 Fanous Video Player: Select Subtitle

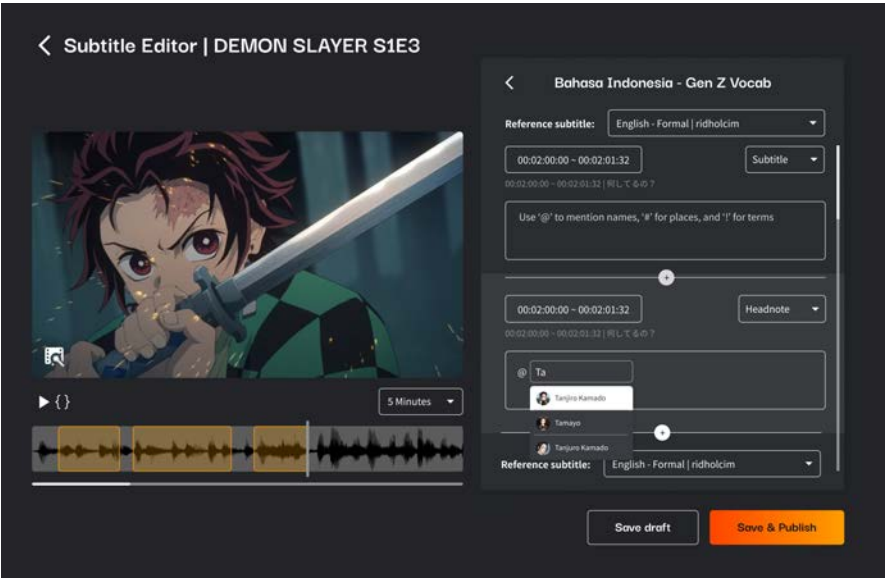


Figure 3.44 Fanous Video Player: Subtitle Editor

Plug-in: A browser extension that allows fansubbers to add their subtitles, enabling fans to watch anime on existing official services with their preferred fansubs. Fanous Plug-in acts as a tool that facilitates fansubbers' ability to provide their subtitles legally and professionally, ensuring an enhanced viewing experience for fans and promoting cooperation between fansubbers and official streaming platforms.

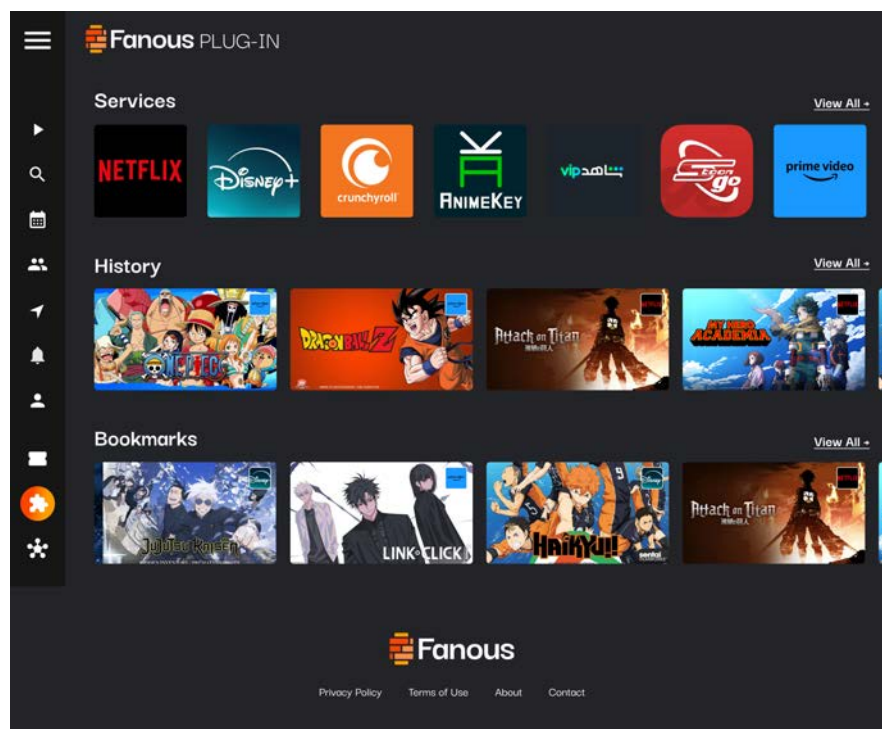


Figure 3.45 Fanous Plug-in Home page

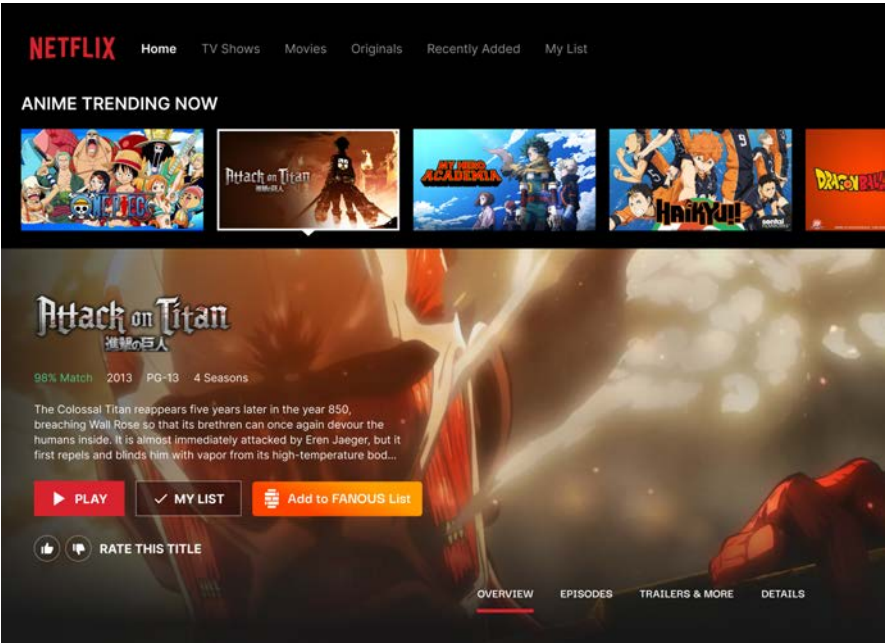


Figure 3.46 Fanous Plug-in on Netflix

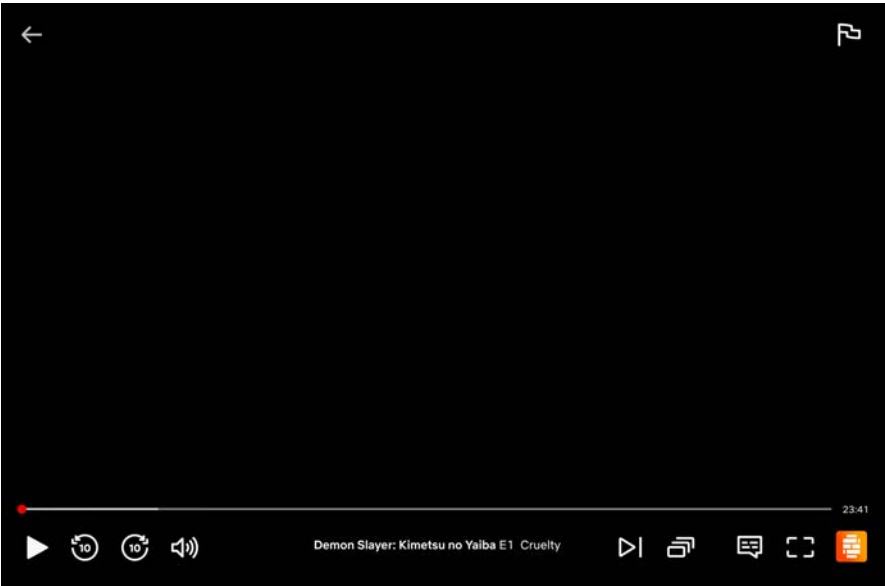


Figure 3.47 Fanous Plug-in on Netflix Video Player

Pass: A unified subscription system for anime streaming services that allows fans to customize their subscription package, choose their preferred services, switch between them automatically, and roam between similar services while traveling. It offers three types of subscriptions: **Select Pass**, where users manually choose specific services; **Auto Pass**, which allows scheduling and automatic switching between services; and **One Pass**, providing access to all services in a particular region. All payments are managed through the Fanous Wallet, with flexible billing options on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. This system provides users with significant flexibility and freedom, making it easier for them to access their favorite content without the hassle of managing multiple subscriptions separately.

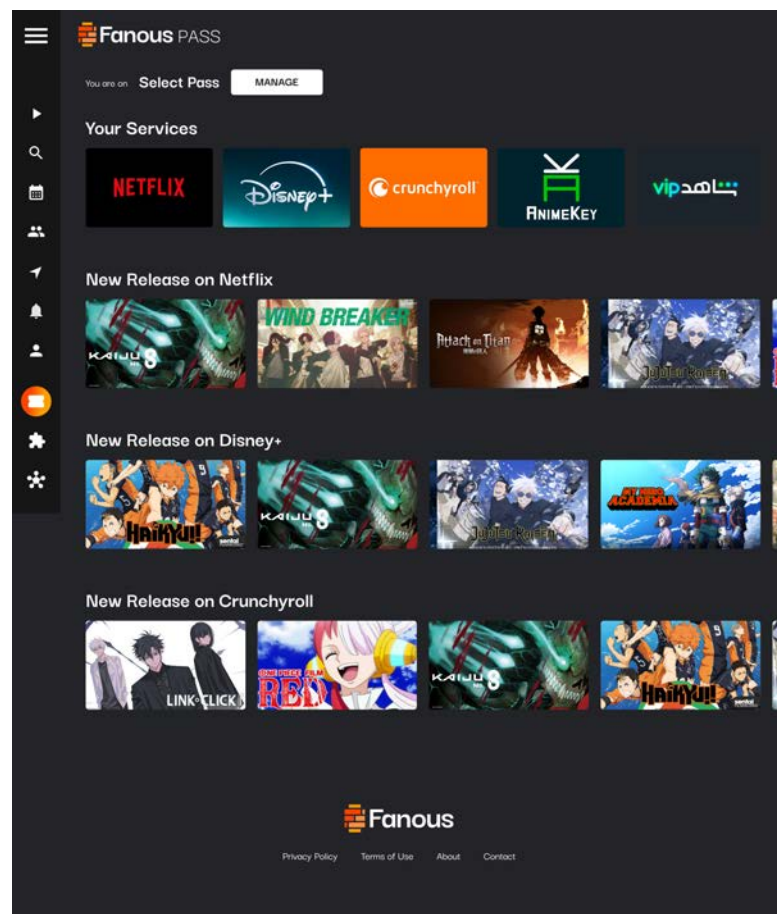


Figure 3.48 Fanous Pass Home Page

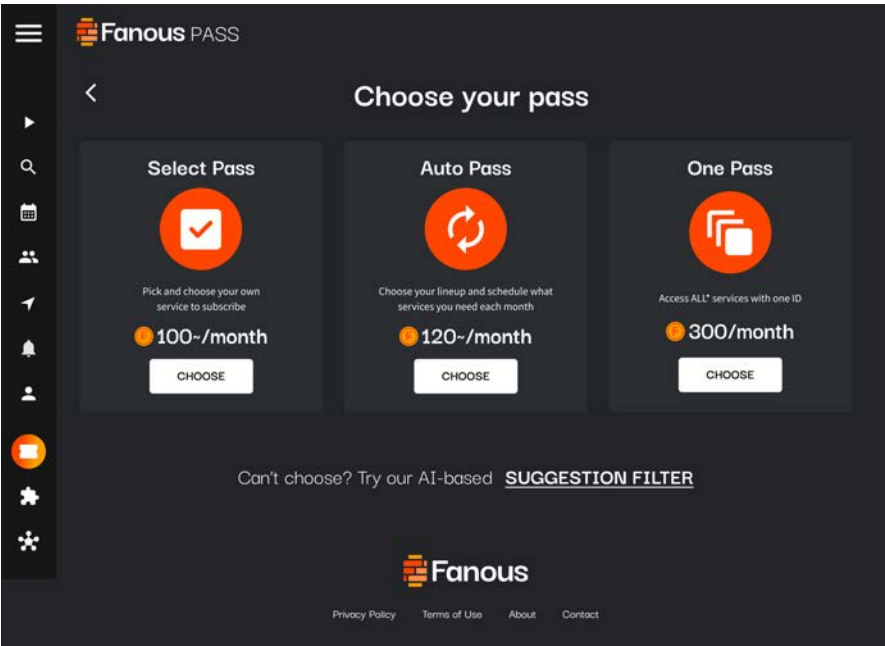


Figure 3.49 Fanous Pass Manage Page

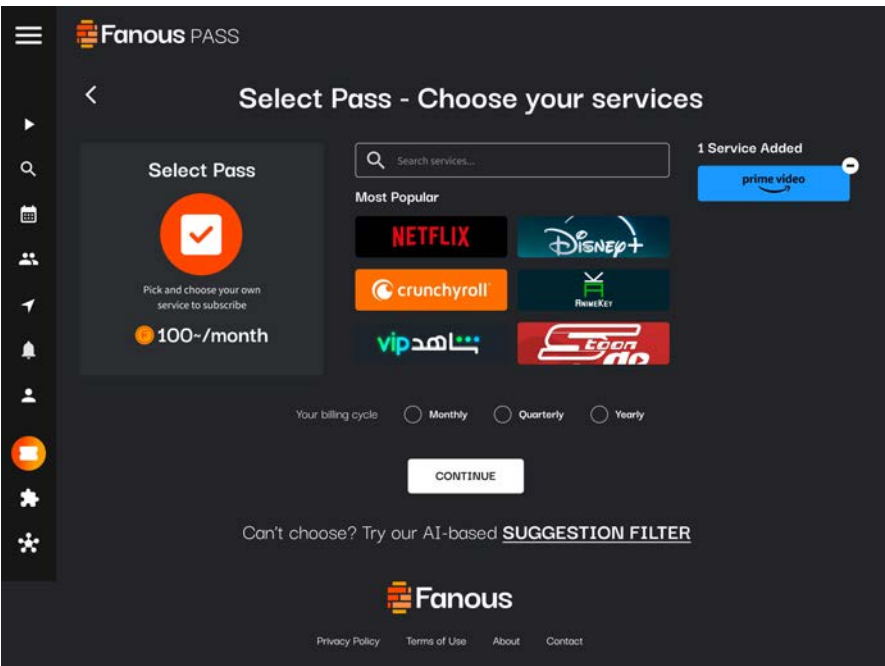


Figure 3.50 Fanous Pass: Select Services Subscription

Hub: A marketplace that brings together intellectual property holders, major distributors, streaming services, and fansubbers. This enables everyone to exchange services and allows fansubbers to subtitle anime through the micro-licensing model. Regional streaming services can monitor statistics and traffic for any micro-licensed anime, and if they find it appealing, they can license it in their region, share revenue, and decide whether to keep it on Fanous Play or direct users to their platform. Fanous Hub serves as a center for communication and collaboration among various stakeholders, enhancing growth and innovation opportunities in the anime industry.

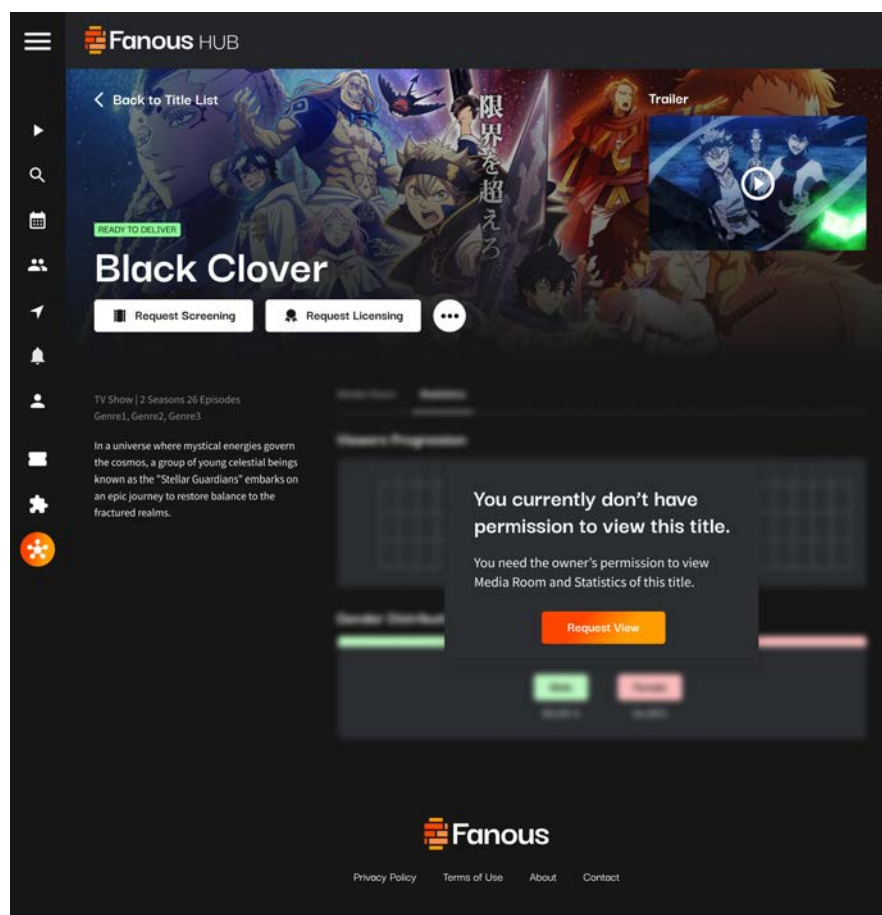


Figure 3.51 Fanous Hub Title Page

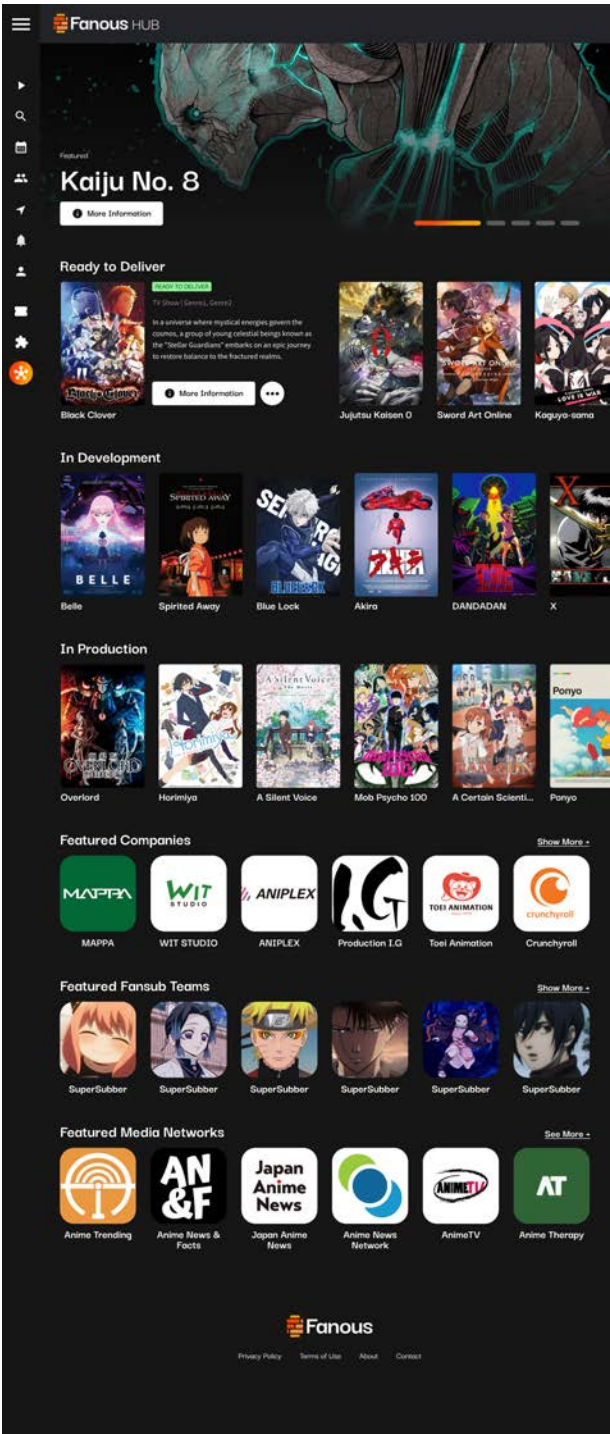


Figure 3.52 Fanous Hub Home Page

Tokens (**FAN Tokens**) play a crucial role in facilitating interactions and rewarding contributions within the Fanous ecosystem. Fans earn tokens by watching ads sponsored by advertisers, paying for subscriptions to services, or purchasing them with their local currency, while fansubbers earn FAN Tokens for each view their subtitles receive. These tokens can be used to skip ads, subscriptions, or any other payment transactions within or outside the platform via the Fanous wallet.

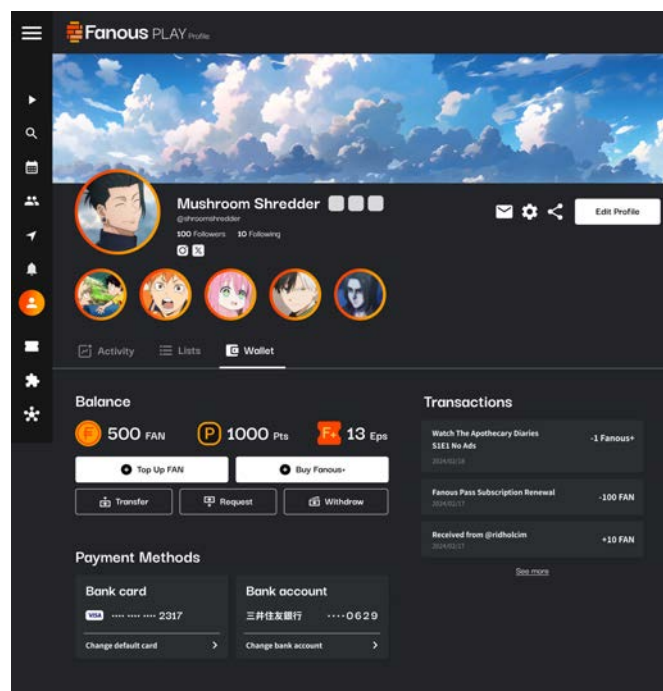


Figure 3.53 Fanous Wallet

In this way, the Fanous ecosystem can achieve a balance between legally providing high-quality content and offering a sustainable platform for fansubbers. Through this integrated system, fans can enjoy high-quality anime with fansubs. At the same time, fansubbers can achieve financial gains, and distributors or streaming services and intellectual property holders can protect their rights, enhancing the overall experience for all stakeholders and contributing to the overall improvement of the anime industry's ecosystem.

3.5.4 User Flow

User flow is the process that users go through while interacting with a system or platform. In the case of the Fanous platform, the user experience and interface have been carefully designed to ensure a smooth and organized process for all stakeholders. Here, the interactions of intellectual property holders, distributors or streaming services, fansubbers, and fans with the Fanous platform are outlined.

Intellectual Property Holders

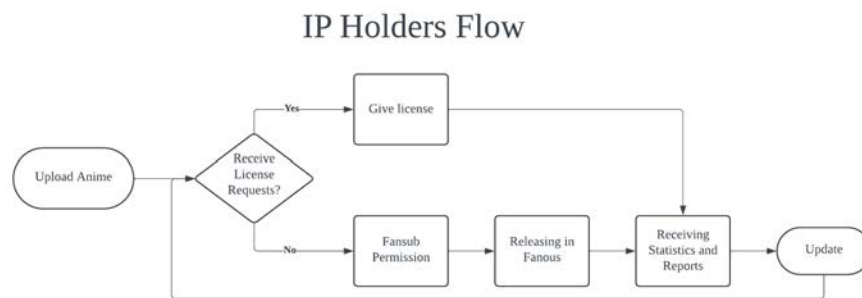


Figure 3.54 Intellectual Property Holders User Flow

In the Fanous platform, intellectual property holders begin by uploading anime content to the platform through Fanous Hub. This is the first step in the user flow, ensuring their titles are accessible to other users on the platform. After uploading the content, intellectual property holders receive license requests from interested parties such as streaming services and distributors. If a license request is approved, the license is granted, allowing the licensed party to use the content legally on their platforms and making it available to Fanous users through their channel on Fanous Play.

If no license requests are received, fansubbers are granted permission to add subtitles to the content and make it directly available to fans on Fanous Play. This allows the content to reach a broader audience with different subtitles while maintaining intellectual property rights. Ultimately, intellectual property holders receive regular reports and statistics on the content's performance, helping them make informed decisions about updating content or adjusting licensing strategies.

These steps ensure the content is distributed legally and sustainably, maintaining quality and intellectual property rights.

Distributors or Streaming Services

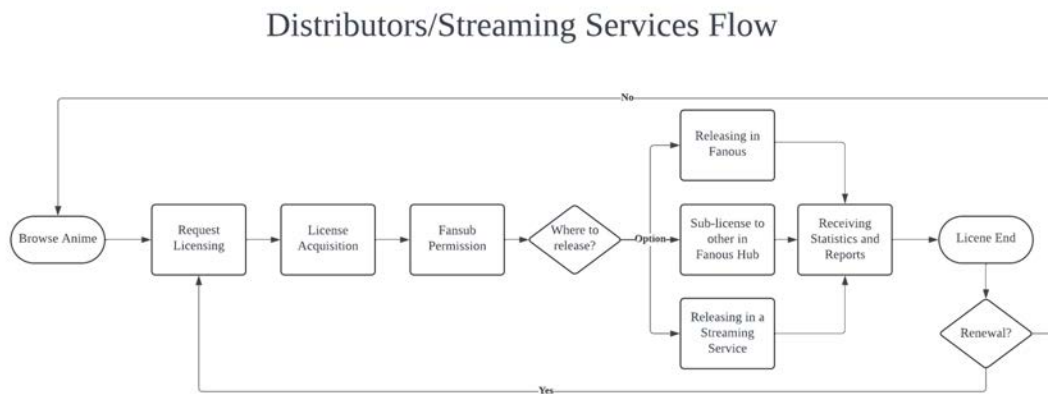


Figure 3.55 Distributors or Streaming Services User Flow

The user flow for distributors or streaming services starts by browsing the available anime content on Fanous Hub. Then, distributors or streaming services submit requests to license the content they wish to feature on their platforms or distribute in their region. After submitting the request, they obtain the necessary licenses, allowing them to publish the anime legally.

Once the license is obtained, distributors or streaming services can choose to publish the anime exclusively on their platforms, make it directly available to fans through their channel on Fanous Play, or grant a sub-license to other parties within Fanous Hub. This step provides distributors with flexibility in using the content and maximizing revenue. Additionally, distributors receive reports and statistics on the content's performance, enabling them to assess the success of the license and make strategic decisions about renewing or ending the license based on performance. This user flow enhances distributors' ability to offer diverse, high-quality content to their subscribers while maintaining intellectual property rights.

Fansubbers

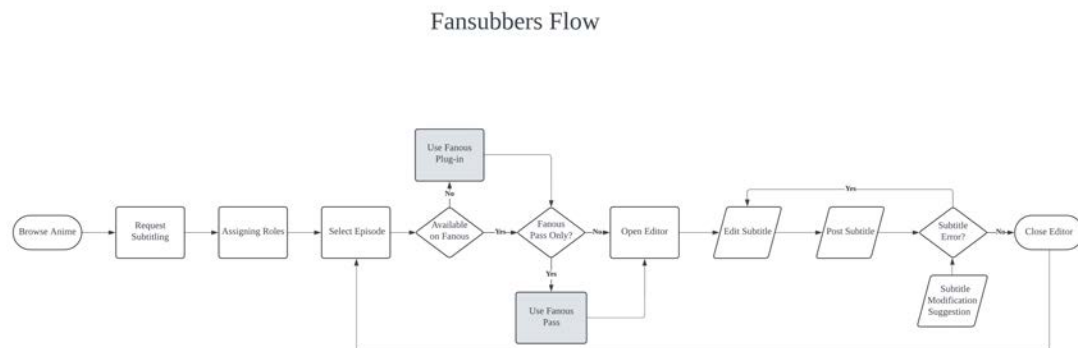


Figure 3.56 Fansubbers User Flow

Fansubbers' user flow starts with browsing the available anime on the Fanous platform. Fansubbers submit requests to subtitle the anime they are interested in. Once the request is approved, roles are assigned among the translation and subtitle team, and the episode to be subtitled is selected. If the anime is available on Fanous Play, they can work on subtitling the episodes through the built-in editor on the platform, which allows cloud-based subtitle editing without needing to download the video file. This ensures intellectual property protection and prevents leaks. The editor also features interactive options where fansubbers can add headnotes and additional information about characters, places, and terms, providing viewers with a deeper understanding of the anime's story, accessible through hovering on-screen or on-subtitle.

If the anime is exclusively available on other streaming service platforms, fansubbers can use the Fanous Plug-in to add their subtitles directly to the episodes on those platforms. Subtitles are published on the platform or via the Fanous Plug-in on other streaming services, allowing viewers to access the content with multiple subtitles across different official platforms. Fansubbers receive feedback from viewers and can make adjustments to improve the quality of the subtitles. This user flow ensures that the translation and subtitles are done legally and professionally, enhancing the viewing experience and expanding the audience base. The Fanous platform promotes interaction between fansubbers and fans, contributing to improved subtitle quality and building a cohesive community.

Fans

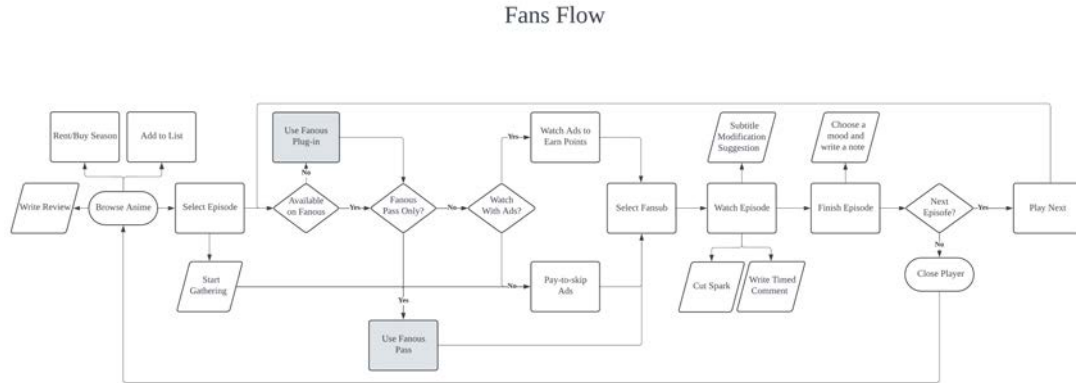


Figure 3.57 Fans User Flow

Fans' user flow begins with browsing the available anime on Fanous Play and selecting the episodes they want to watch. They have the option to watch ads to earn points or pay FAN tokens to skip ads, providing them with flexibility in how they consume content. Additionally, fans can use the Fanous Plug-in to watch anime with their preferred fansubbers' subtitles on other streaming services, which they can subscribe to through Fanous Pass, which unifies subscription and payment processes using the Fanous wallet.

Fans can directly engage with others by starting watch gatherings, leaving comments, notes, and ratings for episodes, adding more interactivity to the overall experience. They can also provide feedback on subtitles and suggest modifications, enhancing interaction between fans and fansubbers. This user flow improves the viewing experience and allows fans to play an active role in improving content quality. The Fanous platform enables fans to enjoy high-quality anime with fansubs, with the ability to interact directly with fansubbers and contribute to content improvement.

Through this integrated user flow among the various stakeholders in the Fanous ecosystem, the user experience is enhanced, and interactions between stakeholders are streamlined, promoting collaboration and ensuring the delivery of high-quality content legally and sustainably.

3.5.5 Anime Licensing Journey in the Fanous Ecosystem

The "Fanous" ecosystem offers an integrated model for managing anime licensing, starting with the intellectual property holder who can either make the anime available directly on the "Fanous Play" or license it to a distributor. If licensed to a distributor, they can choose to stream the anime directly on "Fanous Play" with various fansub options or license it to a streaming service. The streaming service then has the option to either stream the anime via their dedicated channel on "Fanous Play" or exclusively on their own platform, requiring viewers to use the "Fanous Plug-in" browser extension to access diverse fansub options.

If the anime is not made available on "Fanous Play" by the intellectual property holder or distributor, "Fanous" itself steps in to manage the streaming of the anime on its platform while working to secure the necessary licenses from the holder or distributor to ensure legal availability. This system aims to provide users with a rich and legal viewing experience, complete with diverse fansub while respecting the rights of all involved parties.

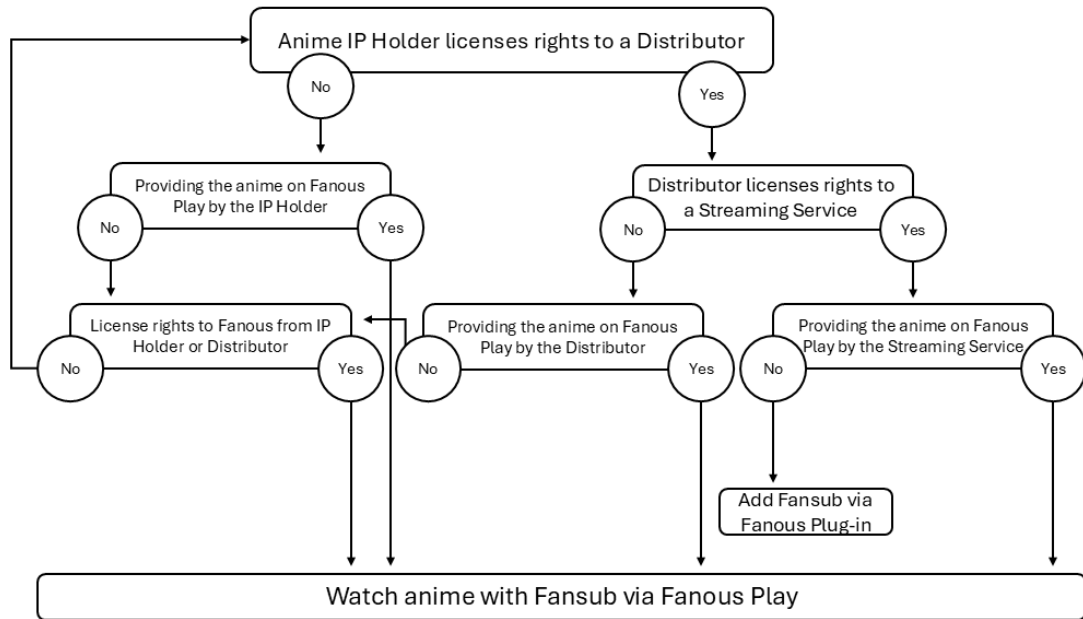


Figure 3.58 Anime Licensing Journey in the Fanous Ecosystem

3.5.6 Monetization Model

Monetization within the Fanous ecosystem relies on several models to generate revenue. These models aim to balance providing legal, high-quality content while encouraging fans and fansubbers to interact and contribute to the system. Using different monetization models, Fanous seeks to ensure the ecosystem's sustainability and generate revenue for all involved parties.

Gamified Video on Demand (GVOD)

The Gamified Video on Demand (GVOD) model is an innovative approach Fanous uses to encourage viewers and contributors to engage more actively within the ecosystem. This model integrates gamification elements into the viewing experience, making it more interactive and appealing to users.

By combining gamification elements with video on demand, Fanous offers an innovative model that balances providing high-quality content with interactive appeal, enhancing the user experience, and supporting the anime ecosystem sustainably and legally. GVOD increases user engagement, generates revenue through ads and in-platform purchases, and improves the viewing experience, thereby increasing user satisfaction and loyalty to the platform.

Users can start using the platform at zero cost by watching ads sponsored by advertisers. By watching those ads, interacting with the platform's content and fansubs, and contributing to the promotion, sharing, and discussion of content, they can earn points that can be converted into FAN Tokens and used within the platform in various payment models.

Pay-to-Skip Ads: Viewers on the Fanous platform can use the pay-to-skip ads option. This feature allows users to pay a certain amount of FAN Tokens to skip ads and enjoy uninterrupted content. They can also purchase pre-paid skip tickets called Fanous+, enabling them to buy a certain number of episodes in advance at a discounted rate to skip ads. This model generates direct revenue from users who prefer an ad-free viewing experience, enhancing user satisfaction and reducing the likelihood of them turning to illegal platforms for an ad-free experience.



Figure 3.59 Play Button for Pay-to-Skip Ads

Watch Ads to Earn: In addition to the pay-to-skip ads option, viewers can choose to watch ads to earn points to convert into FAN Tokens or use for other benefits. These tokens can be used to skip future ads, renew subscriptions, or any other payment transactions within or outside the platform via the Fanous wallet. This model enhances interaction between viewers and advertisers, allowing revenue generation through ads. It also encourages viewers to watch more content, increasing engagement with the Fanous ecosystem.

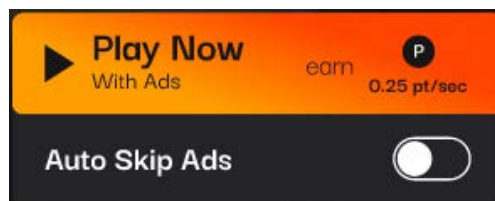


Figure 3.60 Play Button for Watch Ads to Earn

Community Engagement Rewards: Fanous aims to enhance community engagement by offering rewards to active community members. Users can earn points by writing reviews, rating episodes, leaving notes or comments, watching anime together in watch gatherings, suggesting subtitle modifications, and participating in other community activities. These points are converted into FAN Tokens and can be used for additional benefits within the platform, encouraging users to continue interacting and contributing. This model helps build a connected and engaged community, increasing user satisfaction and loyalty to the platform.

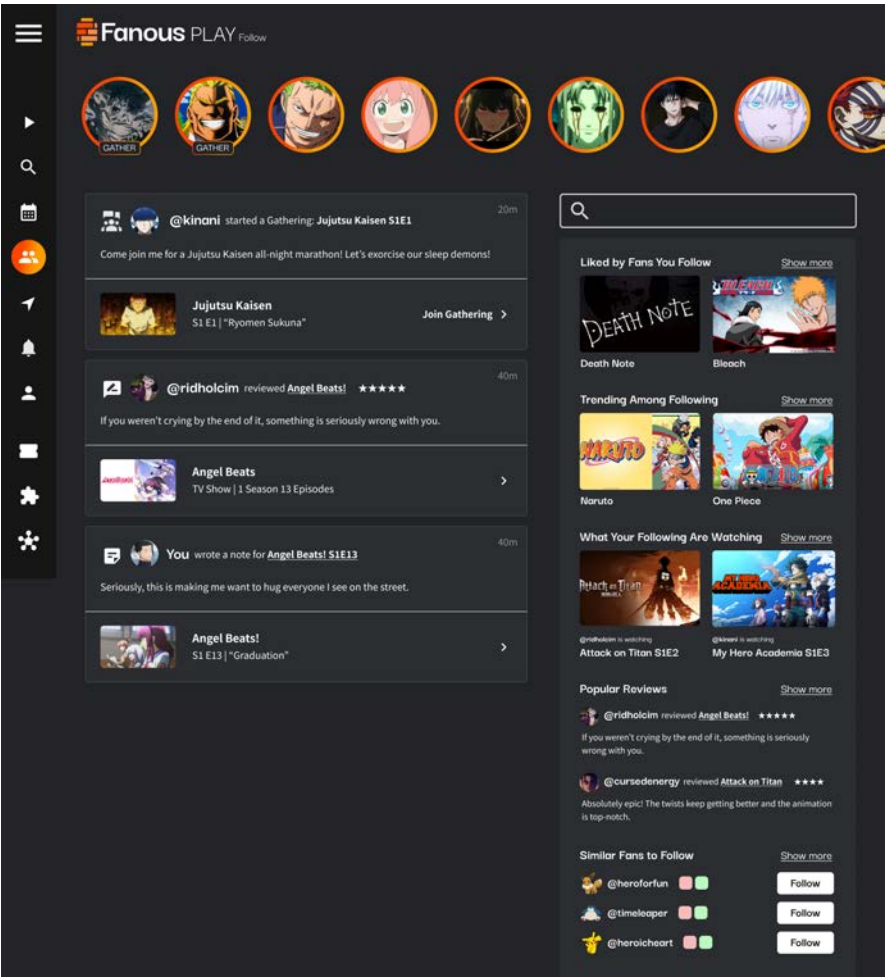


Figure 3.61 Fanous Play Follow Page for Community Engagement

Subscription Video On Demand (SVOD)

The Subscription Video On Demand (SVOD) model offers subscribers anime content through various services and channels within the Fanous ecosystem. This model relies on providing paid subscriptions that allow users to legally access a diverse range of high-quality content.

Subscription to Services: Fanous Pass offers a unified subscription system that allows users to subscribe to multiple streaming services simultaneously. This model enables subscribers to choose the services they want to subscribe to, customize their subscription package, and seamlessly switch between services with automatic or manual control. This model simplifies the subscription and payment process for users, making the viewing experience smoother and more flexible. Additionally, subscribers can benefit from features such as roaming, pause subscriptions, sharing subscriptions with family and friends, and hiding platform ads (except in-episode ads) for a certain amount of FAN Tokens. Special offers and packages based on their needs and interests further enhance the value of the subscription and increase user satisfaction.

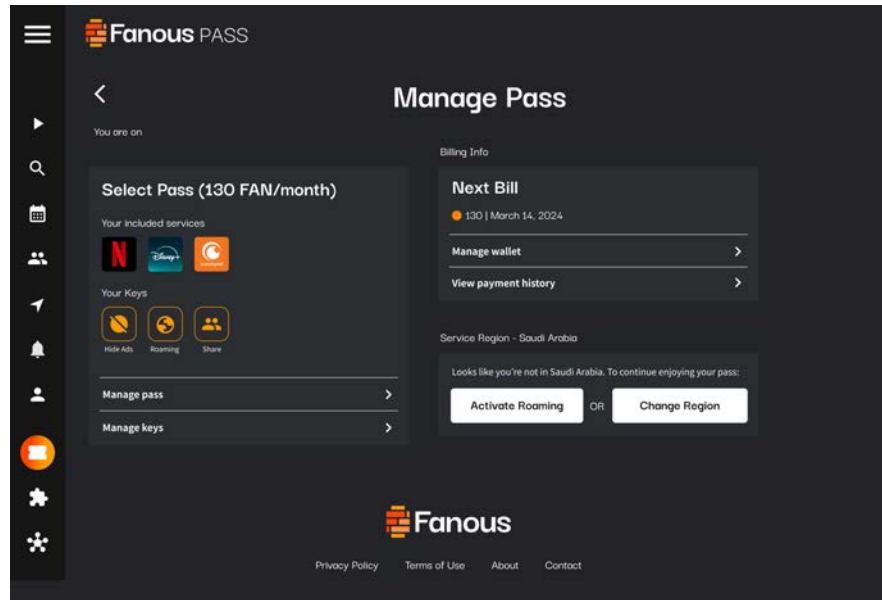


Figure 3.62 Manage Services Subscription via Fanous Pass

Subscription to Channels: Fanous Play also allows the creation of channels within the platform, where intellectual property holders, distributors, and streaming services can provide their anime content directly to users. Subscribers can subscribe to these channels separately, offering them diverse options to access their favorite content. This model enhances revenue through direct subscriptions and allows distributors to reach a broader audience.

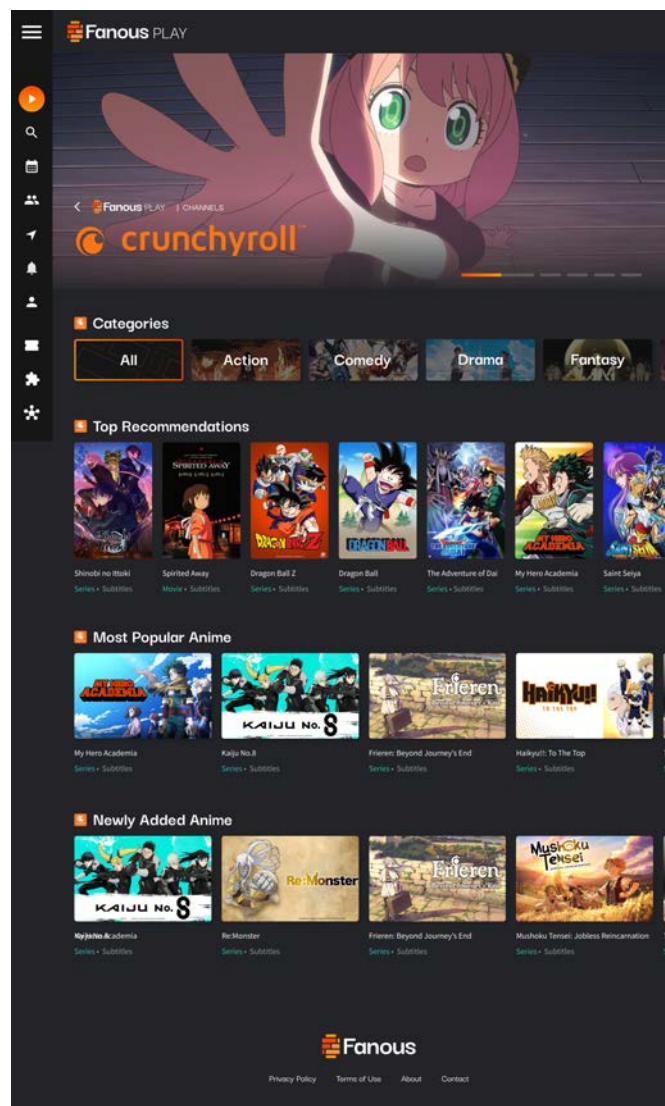


Figure 3.63 Crunchyroll Channel on Fanous Play

Bundled Streaming Services

The Fanous platform aligns with recent developments in the streaming industry by adopting the "Fanous Pass" model, which reflects the growing trend toward service bundling and subscription unification. Studies have shown that consumers feel overwhelmed by managing multiple standalone subscriptions, prompting platforms to offer solutions resembling traditional cable TV experiences. This model simplifies access, reduces costs, and provides a smoother user experience by offering unified packages that combine various services.

According to an article by FilmTake, studies conducted across ten countries revealed that over 85% of respondents expressed interest in an app that manages all their subscriptions through a single platform. This highlights the significant demand for such services and suggests that telecom companies could dominate this market, given their position as the primary providers of home internet in the U.S. [39] Additionally, an article by Cannella Media referenced a Deloitte study, which found that 60% of consumers were interested in bundled streaming services as a way to save money. [40]

The "Fanous Pass" embodies this concept by providing a unified subscription system that allows users to customize their preferred bundles, easily navigate between services, and seamlessly manage their subscriptions. This approach reflects the global trend toward enhancing convenience and flexibility for users.

The Fanous platform ensures users a comprehensive and sustainable viewing experience through these innovative monetization models. These models enhance interaction among all stakeholders and guarantee the provision of legal, high-quality content, contributing to the overall improvement of the anime industry ecosystem.

3.5.7 Fanous Key Features

After the detailed description of the Fanous platform, the following is a summary of its key features that highlight the platform's innovative ecosystem designed specifically for anime fans.

Fanous offers a free starting point, enabling users to earn tokens through ad viewing and social interactions. These tokens can be used to skip ads or redeemed for pre-paid tickets (Fanous+) to watch a specific number of episodes without ads, ensuring a seamless and uninterrupted viewing experience.

The platform's interactive video player enhances engagement with features like detailed character information and access to diverse subtitle options, including fan-made subtitles (fansubs). These subtitles are available directly on the (Fanous Play) or via its browser extension (Fanous Plug-in) on other platforms, allowing users to enjoy a highly customizable viewing experience.

Fanous also emphasizes community interaction, enabling users to share anime lists, participate in discussions, and host watch parties. This focus on social features creates a vibrant environment for anime fans to connect and engage with one another.

To streamline user experience, the platform unifies subscription management by bundling multiple services under a single account and billing system. A built-in wallet further supports token-based payments, which can be used both within the platform and externally.

Lastly, Fanous includes an advanced subtitle editor that empowers fansubbers to refine their work. This feature not only enhances the quality of subtitles but also provides fansubbers an opportunity to earn income, making it a supportive ecosystem for content creators.

Table 3.2 Summary of Fanous Key Features

Get started for free at zero cost	Earn tokens from ads and social interaction
Skip ads using tokens or pre-paid tickets (Fanous+)	Interactive video player with information about characters and subtitles
Choose from several fan-made subtitles (fansubs) in Fanous Player or in other services via the extension	An interactive community with anime fans to share lists, discussions and gathering watching parties ...etc
Manage your subscriptions to different services from one place and bill	Token wallet for payments on and out of the platform
Built-in editor for subtitles (fansubs)	A source of income for Fansubbers

3.6. Test: Gathering User Feedback

3.6.1 Feedback Capture Grid

The Feedback Capture Grid is an organized method for collecting and categorizing feedback from users and stakeholders. The grid includes four sections: what users liked, what they think needs improvement, their questions, and new ideas or suggestions. This method helps in systematically gathering feedback and identifying areas for improvement. In this context, 22 users participated in the Fanous platform trial, and their opinions were collected and categorized into the four sections mentioned, providing a comprehensive view of the user experience and enhancing our understanding of their needs and expectations.

What User Like

Users appreciated many aspects of Fanous, praising the diversity of features it offers. Many noted that Fanous provides an active community where they can discuss episodes, leave comments, and share opinions about anime scenes. This

type of social interaction and the ability to engage with friends enhance the sense of community and make watching a shared experience. Users also liked the ability to gather subtitles from various fansubbers and switch between them in one place, simplifying the search for subtitles and supporting translators as a formal and sustainable source of income.

Another feature that impressed users was the interactive video player, which provides viewers with information and short descriptions about characters and hints during the viewing. This feature enhances the viewing experience, making it more engaging and interactive. The "Fanous Pass" service, which allows managing subscriptions from one place easily and effectively, was highly praised. Users saw it as the future trend for streaming services, enabling them to manage subscriptions from various platforms in one place. Users also appreciated the website design and ease of use, along with supporting features that make it easier to watch and track their favorite anime, such as lists and tracklogs. They emphasized that the simple and user-friendly interface and supporting features contribute to an enhanced and enjoyable user experience.

What Needs Improvement

Users suggested a wide range of improvements to enhance the user experience on the Fanous platform. Some users felt that relying on ads in the free tier might not be the best model for this type of site, as some fansub anime viewers might not like ads and would prefer an alternative free model. They recommended exploring other free models that ensure sustainability without the need for ads.

They pointed out the importance of adding a feature in the video player, in addition to the descriptions of characters, places, and terms, where explanations for specific plot points can be included to remind viewers of details they might forget in long anime series. This would enhance story understanding and help in following plot developments.

Users suggested developing a mobile app to make access and usage easier anytime and anywhere, making the platform more flexible and user-friendly. This app would be beneficial for users who prefer to watch anime on the go. Additionally, some users emphasized the need for the platform to support viewing on TV screens

and tablets, providing a better and more comfortable viewing experience for those who prefer to watch anime on larger screens.

Users recommended adding an AI tool for text correction and spell-checking. These tools can improve the quality of translations, making them more accurate and professional. There were also suggestions to develop the subtitle editor interface to add visual effects and integrate it with programs like Aegisub and Adobe apps to enhance the subtitle and on-screen effects. This would contribute to making the subtitling experience more professional.

Users also recommended creating a closed community for fansubbers where they can communicate with each other, organize work, and exchange tasks. This community could also enable multiple fansub teams to collaborate on major projects, especially completed titles, to speed up their completion. This community could also organize competitions with a reward system for fansubbers in the form of points, certificates, or badges.

Users Questions

Users had questions about how fansubbers earn income and whether it is calculated per line, episode, or another method. They also inquired about how translation quality is ensured and whether there is a review and verification mechanism. Additionally, users were curious about how projects are selected and managed, the schedule adherence, and the selection process for fansubbers.

There were also questions about convincing anime producers and licensors to place their shows on the platform, especially since most anime is already licensed on other streaming platforms. They wondered about the value Fanous adds if it cannot secure licensed shows.

Questions about ads and whether ad blockers could bypass them also arose. Users were curious about how to skip ads in Fanous Play if they already have subscriptions to one of the streaming services included in Fanous Pass. Users also asked about the importance of Fanous Pass in this platform specifically since its main focus is to legalize fansubs and whether it only brings anime content from the mentioned streaming services.

Users Ideas

Users provided a range of constructive ideas to improve the platform and increase its effectiveness. Users proposed implementing a mentorship system where experienced fansubbers guide new ones and exchange tips for incentives. This would help transfer knowledge and experience, enhancing translation and subtitling quality. They also recommended adding a schedule based on broadcasting times from rights holders and distributors to track subtitle deadlines and project progress, with rewards for adhering to the schedule. This would contribute to organizing work and improving efficiency.

Lastly, some users felt that the Fanous project might face criticism for being overly complex just to legalize fansubs. Therefore, they suggested seriously considering expanding the project's scope to include larger goals other than fansubs in the future, as the idea is very promising and could have broader applications beyond anime fansubbing. They suggested applying the Fanous model to manga translations, noting the lack of any Arabic official option for manga enthusiasts. Other users suggested creating a lite version of Fanous for quick access to specific functions, making the platform easier and faster to use. These ideas could expand the platform's scope and meet the needs of a broader audience.

Table 3.3 Summary of Feedback Capture Grid

Users Like	• Feature diversity: active community, comments, and discussions. • Ease of switching between subtitles and supporting translators. • Interactive video player with character info. • Fanous Pass for easy subscription management. • Website design and user-friendly interface.
Needs Improvement	• Explore alternatives to ads in the free tier. • Add features for plot point explanations in the video player. • Develop a mobile app and support for TV/tablet viewing. • AI tools for spell-checking and text corrections. • Improve subtitle editor with visual effects integration. • Create a closed community for fansubbers.
Users Questions	• How are fansubbers compensated (per line, episode, etc.)? • How is translation quality ensured? • How are anime projects selected for the platform? • How to convince licensors to place content on Fanous? • How to bypass ad blockers? • What is the importance of Fanous Pass on the platform?
Users Ideas	• Mentorship system for new fansubbers with incentives. • Broadcast-based schedule with rewards for deadline adherence. • Expanding Fanous to include manga translations. • Lite version for quick access to basic functions.

3.6.2 Solution Interviews

To evaluate the effectiveness of the new ecosystem and the Fanous idea, they were presented to key stakeholders in the anime industry to gather their opinions and analyze their reactions. Three main stakeholders were selected: intellectual property holders, streaming services, and fansubbers. Each stakeholder had one representative, IP Holder 1 and Streaming Service 2, previously interviewed in the empathize stage. Additionally, a different fansubber from the ones interviewed earlier, referred to as Fansubber 3, was included to provide another perspective.

Fansubber Interview

Fansubber 3 pointed out that many fansubbers work in areas with weak or expensive internet connections. When working as a team, they download the low-quality raw video for translation and upload the subtitle file for viewers, which piracy sites then burn onto the videos. They questioned how this issue would be addressed in Fanous, as the subtitle editor works on the cloud and video files cannot be downloaded, which might deter them from using Fanous and continuing pirating. There were concerns about the platform's usability during internet outages or slow connections, which might require a solution allowing offline work when necessary.

Additionally, some fansubbers translate Blu-ray versions, which are usually different from the TV versions broadcasted on streaming services. These versions are often not legally available online with subtitles, as they are only sold via Blu-ray or DVD discs. Fansubber 3 questioned how Fanous would handle this issue.



Figure 3.64 Example of the Difference Between TV and Blu-ray Versions

Furthermore, Fansubber 3 mentioned that the current editor has limited options for on-screen effects. They explained that working with advanced programs like Adobe Illustrator gives them greater freedom in adding complex visual effects. If the editor is not enhanced to cover all these features, fansubbers might prefer to download the raw video and work on it offline, then upload the subtitle file to Fanous.

Fansubber 3 also expressed concerns about interacting with official entities, particularly regarding restrictions on their freedom and not providing satisfactory compensation. Although earning from Fanous is attractive, fansubbers need clarification on how the work will be organized, their relationship with official entities, and how revenues will be distributed among them. There was a fear that fansubbers might face restrictions that stifle their creativity and limit their independence.

Streaming Service Interview

Streaming Service 2 expressed concerns that a unified platform like Fanous could pose strong competition. Having a single gateway containing all publishers might threaten their exclusive relationships with rights holders and open opportunities for competitors. They mentioned that fair competition needs guarantees and clarification on the added value Fanous can offer to major streaming services already present in the market.

However, they noted that Fanous would be very beneficial for platforms that do not provide subtitles in general or for certain languages due to the absence of a dedicated department or lack of translators for those languages. Fanous could offer a practical solution to this problem by integrating with streaming platforms and providing multiple subtitles covering various languages, enhancing the attractiveness of these platforms to users who speak underserved languages. Furthermore, Fanous would be useful for minor regions where streaming services do not provide satisfactory service. Fanous could offer a solution to bridge gaps in these markets and improve the user experience.

Streaming Service 2 also showed interest in the possibility of fansubbers adding their subtitles via the Fanous Plug-in, but they expressed concerns about how this might affect their reputation and brand due to the varying quality between

official and fansub translations. There was a fear that having multiple subtitles with varying quality could confuse users and cause them to lose trust in the official subtitles provided by the platform.

Additionally, Streaming Service 2 mentioned that Fanous Hub could serve as a platform for officially hiring fansubbers after evaluating their level and experience in fansubbing through Fanous. This platform could help discover new talents and improve subtitle quality in the long run.

Intellectual Property Holder Interview

IP Holder 1 stated that they have excellent relationships with major global streaming services and thus do not believe they would use Fanous to directly reach fans to watch their anime in collaboration with fansubbers. They see streaming services as the best fit for using Fanous and directly interacting with fans and fansubbers.

However, they expressed optimism about Fanous Hub as a means to facilitate communication with major global streaming services. It provides a technical alternative that makes it easier to track licensing processes, income reports, episode availability, and marketing materials directly to the platforms, as well as automating some operations for completion. They believe this approach could reduce the effort involved in managing licenses and improve work efficiency.

IP Holder 1 also sees Fanous as highly beneficial for small studios and production companies that do not have connections with major global streaming services. Fanous could serve as a gateway for these companies to reach international markets and translate their works through fansubbers into various languages, contributing to greater success for these works. They believe providing a platform that allows small companies to interact with fansubbers and distribute their content legally and profitably will enhance anime distribution and improve the viewing experience for audiences worldwide.

Table 3.4 Summary of Solution Interviews

Interview Objectives	To evaluate the effectiveness of the Fanous ecosystem by gathering feedback from three main stakeholders: IP holders, streaming services, and fansubbers.
Fansubber Interview	• Concerns about working in areas with slow/poor internet connections, and the need for offline work options. • Question on how Blu-ray versions, which differ from TV versions, will be handled. • Limited features in the current subtitle editor; desire for more advanced options. • Concerns about restrictions from official entities and unclear revenue distribution.
Streaming Service Interview	• Concerns about Fanous being strong competition for existing streaming platforms. • Fanous as a solution for underserved languages and regions. • Interest in integrating Fanous subtitles but concerns about varying quality affecting platform reputation. • Fanous Hub as a potential platform for evaluating and hiring fansubbers.
Intellectual Property Holder Interview	• Believes streaming services are best suited for direct collaboration with fansubbers. • Optimism about Fanous Hub as a technical alternative to facilitate licensing processes. • Fanous could help small studios reach global markets by collaborating with fansubbers to translate their work. • Benefits small studios by improving anime distribution and enhancing the viewing experience.

The design chapter outlines the comprehensive approach taken to develop and validate the Fanous ecosystem model using the design thinking framework. This process involved empathizing with key stakeholders, defining core problems, generating creative solutions, and prototyping a robust system that integrates fan-subbers, intellectual property holders, distributors, and streaming services. The discussion chapter will evaluate feedback from stakeholders, analyze limitations encountered during implementation, and explore future directions to enhance the system. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's impact and offer strategic recommendations for its successful adoption and growth in the anime streaming market.

Chapter 4

Discussion

This study aimed to develop a new ecosystem model to legalize the process of unofficial anime fan-made subtitles (fansubbing), as this activity is one of the contributing factors to the proliferation of anime piracy. The study posits that current digital streaming services have failed to effectively combat piracy and that integrating fansubbers into the business model of legal streaming services could be a legal alternative for anime fans. To achieve this, several research questions were addressed: Why do fansub groups continue their activities despite the expansion of legal streaming services? Why do fans prefer watching fansubbed anime? How can fansubbers' participation be legalized to benefit all concerned parties?

The findings of this study align with the literature regarding fansubbers' motivations and the continued prevalence of anime piracy. Fansubbers and anime fans both highlight the inadequacies of official subtitles and the lack of legal alternatives, contributing to the widespread use of unofficial mediums for accessing anime content. The survey results also reflect statistics on anime piracy, confirming that a significant percentage of fans rely on both legal and illegal mediums to watch anime, with many prioritizing fansubbed content for its cultural relevance and quality.

When comparing the literature with the survey results from the empathize stage of the design thinking methodology followed in this study, we find alignment in motivations. The results confirmed that 65% of fansubbers continue their work because the anime they subtitle is not available officially, and 36% continue due to the poor quality of official subtitles, reflecting a strong belief that official subtitles do not adequately meet fans' needs. The results also confirmed global statistics mentioned in the introduction regarding piracy rates, with 89% of respondents

using anime piracy sites and applications, while 41% use official streaming services.

Regarding the legality of the mediums they use, 51% of participants rely on both official and unofficial mediums to watch anime, 43% rely only on unofficial and illegal mediums, and 6% exclusively use official and legal mediums, which means 94% use piracy sites. The low exclusive reliance on legal official mediums indicates that these official mediums have failed to provide an alternative to piracy sites and fansub translations and are not sufficient to dispense with unofficial illegal mediums. 56% of anime fans believe that pirated anime sites are necessary due to the lack of alternatives, a sentiment shared by 51% of fansubbers.

Regarding why anime fans prefer watching anime with fansubs, opinions focus on fansubs being more connected to anime culture and closer to anime fans. 28% believe that fansubs are closer to them because fansubbers are anime fans like them, and in terms of quality, 80% of anime fans rate the quality of fansubs as high compared to only 58% for official subtitles. This supports the literature review indicating that Arab fansubbers produce higher quality subtitles than official ones, attracting anime fans to them. [24]

Another reason is the delay in official subtitles; 63% watch the episode with fansubs without re-watching it with official subtitles due to the delay. While approximately 46% of viewers watch anime episodes whenever possible without a specific schedule, however; having the episode on a pirated site earlier makes it possible for them to watch the episode through it. Similarly, 46% watch the episodes as soon as possible after the Japanese release or within hours or a day, indicating a strong preference for not waiting long, only 8% wait until the entire season is released.

One more reason is the lack of legal alternatives during travel; 67% resort to unofficial mediums due to the unavailability of certain anime on the official platforms they subscribe to, forcing them to either subscribe to multiple official platforms or resort to piracy sites, with the latter being the more likely choice. Additionally, 74% of them face difficulties in accessing Arabic subtitles on global platforms during travel, leading them to use piracy sites to watch their favorite anime with Arabic subtitles.

This underscores the importance of finding legal alternatives that integrate fansubs into official streaming services, given fans' preference for them or their precedence in publishing while ensuring global availability on various streaming services worldwide.

There might be concerns that this could affect the consumption of good-quality subtitles on streaming services, but participants' responses confirmed the opposite. 41% of participants stated they would choose the best available option between official subtitles and fansubs. Moreover, 55% wait for a better fansub if the first available one is not satisfactory. Also, when asked what they would do if fansubs were legalized, 38% said they would watch the better subtitles of the two.

In terms of fansub legality, 68% of anime fans disagreed with the illegality of fansubbing and saw the importance of it being legally permitted. Opinions were divided on how to handle the situation: 51% believed fansubs should remain free and active without any changes, while 49% supported organizing fansubs through official services. These nearly equal percentages reflect a concern among half of the anime fans that legalizing fansubbing might affect their experience, which is what Fanous seeks to avoid.

From a legal perspective, the literature indicates that fansubbing exists in a gray area with unclear legal status in various countries. Some countries like the United States treat it under the principle of fair use, especially for unlicensed works, or limit it to providing subtitle files without the video [20,21], as 55% of fansubbers believe that fansubs are legal only if the subtitle file is provided without pirated video files. However, some argue in the literature that in the digital publishing era, fansubbing cannot be considered fair use as it encourages piracy sites to post episodes with high-quality videos after burning the subtitles onto them. [19] In contrast, Japan's "soft law" aims to ease strict regulations and promote fans' participation through guidelines and self-regulation that ensure intellectual property rights are not violated. [22,23]

This legal gap has created an opportunity for many piracy sites to exploit, using the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) to protect themselves. [17] They claim not to own the materials on their sites, with their staff uploading the content to external video hosting platforms, avoiding storing it on their servers to protect

it from claims and strikes. All claims and strikes are directed at video hosting platforms, which will remove the content, but piracy sites will re-upload it to numerous video hosting platforms, making it difficult for rights holders to track and demand removal. [1]

This practice also harms fansubbers, as piracy sites collect fansub files from blogs and fansubbers' pages without permission, burn them onto video episodes, and upload them to video hosting platforms. 58% of fansubbers do not support these sites but acknowledge that nothing protects their copyright. 36% do not mind as long as their names are not removed, but 26% indicated that their translations were stolen by these sites with their names removed, emphasizing the need to protect fansubbers' rights as well, not just the rights of intellectual property holders, distributors, and streaming services.

Based on the above, it is clear that legalizing fansubber participation while ensuring the interests of all stakeholders is essential, but how can this be achieved? To address this and provide a new model different from existing ones, previous case studies were examined for their utilization of fansubbers or technologies that could be employed in the new model.

The study concluded that Crunchyroll's experience of transitioning from a piracy site to a legal streaming service and employing translators who were previously fansubbers indicates the potential for integrating fansubbers into a new model. [1] Similarly, Viki's experience with its community-driven translation platform for Asian dramas demonstrates the feasibility of legalizing fansubs and establishing communities within legal streaming services. [26,27] Likewise, Amara's experience in translating educational content through volunteer translators and establishing a training system for knowledge exchange among volunteer translators further supports this idea. [28]

However, both models lack compensation for translators, threatening their sustainability and continuity. This underscores the importance of providing fair financial compensation through a reward system, as implemented by DLsite for publishing doujinshi content with an option for voluntary work where compensation goes to content creators; however, this experience is limited to works by independent individuals, who can often agree to have their work translated by

other independents. [35]

Another example is Subscene, which successfully provided a platform for fansubbers to upload their subtitles files but faced legal and financial challenges leading to its closure, highlighting the need for a legal and sustainable alternative. [31] Lastly, Trancy, which primarily serves educational language learning purposes through a browser extension allowing users to translate streaming videos using AI, suggests the feasibility of applying this technology to legalize fansubbing through a tool that allows fansubbers to integrate their subtitles into official streaming services legally without relying on piracy sites. [36]

Following the design thinking methodology and after conducting surveys and interviews, a clear picture of the problem emerged. Based on Gabe Newell's quote, the co-founder of the digital video game distribution service Steam: "Piracy is a service problem." [8] To solve this problem, we must improve the service provided and present a new model that addresses the issues of current services and piracy sites. Fanous proposes solutions including enhancing transparency, adopting a sharing economy, and eliminating geo-blocking, along with providing a legal platform with licensed content and legal subtitles in exchange for FAN tokens, offering a sustainable legal alternative for users and translators.

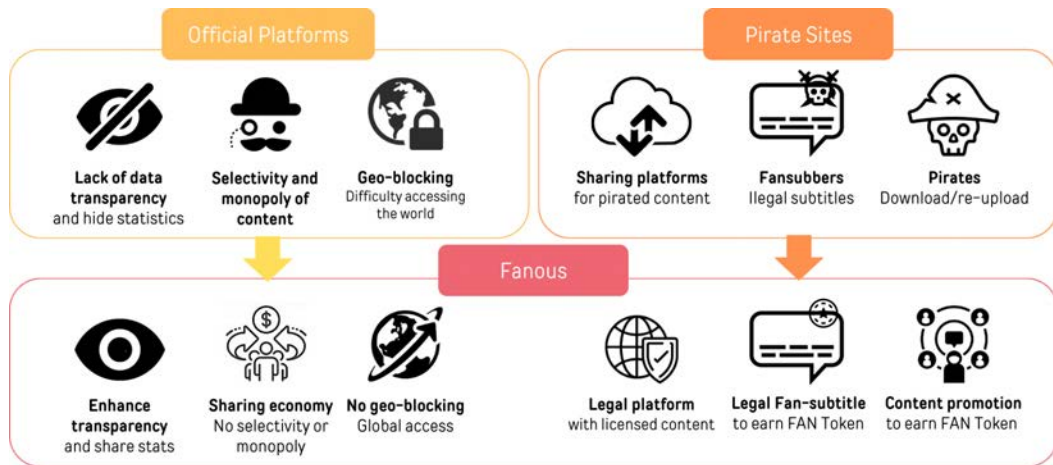


Figure 4.1 Fanous Solutions

Based on the empathize stage to understand the needs of stakeholders, including anime fans, fansubbers, intellectual property holders, distributors, and official

streaming services, identified in the stakeholder map and problem definition in the define stage, followed by brainstorming and analysis using the NABC framework in the ideate stage, the prototype for the new ecosystem and Fanous platform was developed. The platform consists of four sections: Play, Plug-in, Pass, and Hub. It was tested through a user feedback capture grid and solution interviews with stakeholders, resulting in the findings to be addressed in the evaluation and limitations section, upon which future actions will be determined.

4.1. Evaluation

This evaluation will compare how the "Fanous" model meets the needs of different stakeholders in the empathize and test stages. We will review the proposed solutions in the prototype and see how these needs and expectations were met based on the test results and feedback from users and stakeholders.

In the empathize stage:

The needs and opinions of various stakeholders were gathered and analyzed through surveys, interviews, and observations. The goal of this stage was to identify and understand what fans, fansubbers, distributors or streaming services, and intellectual property holders need to ensure their expectations are met and to achieve a balance in the proposed model.

Fans represent the largest and primary target group for the "Fanous" ecosystem. Most fans prefer fansubs, considering them to be of high quality, and seek flexible subscription options, both free and paid, that allow them access to a wide range of anime titles and streaming services. According to the surveys, fans wanted an easy and convenient viewing experience that allowed them to access multiple fansubs in one place. To meet these needs, "Fanous" offers a platform that integrates various services in one place and includes multiple fansubs in different languages via Fanous Play and Fanous Plug-in, enabling them to access a comprehensive library of titles through a unified subscription using Fanous Pass. This allows them to get diverse, high-quality fansub content without needing to subscribe to multiple services separately.

Fansubbers play a crucial role in translating anime into different languages. These translators seek recognition for their efforts and the ability to work legally without risking intellectual property violations. To meet this need, "Fanous" provides a cloud-based subtitle editing tool that offers various features compatible with fansub characteristics, such as adding headnotes and designing on-screen visual effects, earning points that can be converted into Fan Tokens. According to the survey, most fansubbers view fansubbing as a hobby to fill the gap created by the absence of certain works on official streaming services or the delay of official subtitles. They also consider official subtitles to be of poor quality, highlighting the need for a platform that allows them to work legally and sustainably.

Distributors and streaming services aim to attract more subscribers, protect their content from piracy, and enhance access to a broader audience. They look for legal ways to enable collaboration with fansubbers without negatively impacting their revenues and to provide diverse, high-quality subtitles to their audience. To meet these needs, "Fanous" offers a unified subscription system via "Fanous Pass," ensuring users can access legal streaming services worldwide from one place, with manual and automatic switching and roaming while traveling capabilities. "Fanous Play" allows distributors and streaming services to offer micro-licenses for their content within their own channels, enabling fansubbers to add multiple subtitles legally to meet fans' preferences. Additionally, the "Fanous Plug-in" gives distributors and streaming services access to the fansub database, allowing their users to view fansubs directly on their platform without needing to resort to piracy sites. Furthermore, they can collaborate with fansubbers as freelancers or assign specific projects to them and hire them via "Fanous Hub." These measures provide integrated solutions that combine high-quality content delivery and intellectual property protection, making "Fanous" an effective platform for distributors and streaming services to meet their audience's needs and protect their content from piracy.

Intellectual property holders face significant challenges in protecting their rights and increasing transparency in revenue sharing. They need transparent reports showing how revenues are distributed to ensure the legal and sustainable distribution of their content and face difficulties in licensing and complex

communication with distributors and streaming services in different countries, in addition to setting licensing fees and tracking data transparency. To meet these needs, "Fanous Hub" offers an online marketplace for content licenses, providing intellectual property holders with transparent reports and ensuring the legal and sustainable distribution of their content. Some intellectual property holders prefer to distribute content across multiple platforms to reach a wider audience and increase revenues. They also need to find legal ways to make anime available in regions lacking licensing platforms. "Fanous Play" helps expand their direct reach to the audience through fansubs via micro-licenses. Collaboration with fansub teams is beneficial if done under the supervision of official streaming services to ensure translation quality, which "Fanous" facilitates through its comprehensive platform. To combat piracy, they see the need to establish a system that redirects lost funds due to piracy to ensure the industry's sustainability, and "Fanous" acts as an effective solution by providing a legal and sustainable environment for content distribution. This model promotes collaboration between intellectual property holders, distributors, and fansubbers to ensure high-quality content and protection from violations.

In the test stage:

User and stakeholder feedback was collected using systematic methods such as the feedback capture grid and solution interviews. The goal of this stage was to validate the ideas and prototypes and ensure the proposed solutions meet the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.

Fans expressed great appreciation for the diverse features offered by "Fanous." They praised the community interaction that allows them to discuss episodes and share opinions about anime scenes, as well as the ability to access multiple fansubs in one place, making it easier to find fansubs legally and support fansubbers as a sustainable source of income. They also liked the interactive video player that enhances the viewing experience by providing short descriptions of characters and terms during viewing. Fans praised the Fanous Pass, which allows them to manage their subscriptions from one place efficiently and conveniently, making the subscription and content management process smoother and more flexible. According to the surveys, most users prefer an ad-free subscription model but are

open to ads in the free model. Fanous Play introduced a new payment model where users can earn points by watching ads and convert them into Fan Tokens to skip ads, along with traditional subscription options via Fanous Pass, enhancing the variety of payment models offered by "Fanous". However, fans suggested some improvements, such as adding information about specific plot points in the interactive video player, developing a mobile app for access and use anytime and anywhere, and supporting viewing on larger screens to enhance the viewing experience. They also see the importance of having other free models besides ads, as anime fans who watch fansubs on piracy sites may not prefer ads or subscriptions, posing a significant challenge for "Fanous" to overcome.

Fansubbers appreciated the recognition of their efforts and the ability to earn income through points, as well as direct interaction with fans to improve subtitle quality. However, they suggested improving the subtitle editor interface and adding more advanced tools for visual effects, integrating with specialized tools like Aegisub and Adobe apps, which would improve the quality of subtitles and visual effects provided. They also emphasized the importance of adding an AI-assisted text correction tool to enhance translation quality. Users also recommended creating a closed community for fansubbers to communicate with each other, share tips, organize work, and exchange tasks. Additionally, they suggested creating a guide to direct new fansubbers and a schedule for publication to improve work organization and efficiency.

Distributors and streaming services expressed satisfaction with the improved collaboration with fansubbers and the unified subscriptions. "Fanous" is expected to be extremely useful for platforms that do not generally offer subtitles or for specific languages due to the lack of a dedicated department or translators for those languages, improving the experience for users who speak different languages. Additionally, "Fanous" can be an effective solution for smaller regions where streaming services do not provide satisfactory service by offering multiple subtitles in different languages, enhancing these platforms' appeal to users in those regions. Distributors also showed interest in the possibility of adding fansubs via the Fanous Plug-in, allowing them to offer various legal fansub options to meet fans' preferences and increase their interaction with the platform, provided that

the quality of subtitles is guaranteed and does not negatively impact the service's reputation. Furthermore, Fanous Hub can be an ideal platform for hiring fansubbers officially after evaluating their level and experience, helping discover new talents in the translation field, and improving subtitles quality in the long run, thus enhancing the service's professionalism and appeal.

Intellectual property holders expressed satisfaction with the improved collaboration with major global streaming services through Fanous Hub, which facilitates tracking licensing operations, income reports, episode availability, and marketing materials directly on the platforms, automating some processes to reduce effort and improve work efficiency. However, one intellectual property holder noted that communication would primarily be with distributors and streaming services rather than directly with fans, as they prefer to work with these entities unless some works cannot be licensed to distributors and streaming services. They also believe Fanous Play can be a gateway for these unlicensed works, here Fanous could be the middle contact between the intellectual property holder and the fansubbers to ensure quality and compliance with requirements. It is also effective for smaller studios and production companies that do not have connections with major streaming services, allowing them to reach global markets and subtitle their works into multiple languages, enhancing their success. They think providing a platform that allows interaction with fans and legal content distribution will enhance anime distribution and improve the viewing experience for audiences worldwide.

By comparing the empathize and test stages, it is clear that the "Fanous" model aims to provide an integrated and sustainable solution that meets the aspirations of all parties involved in the anime industry. Positive feedback from fans, fansubbers, distributors, and intellectual property holders indicates the model's success in meeting essential needs, with some suggestions for continuous improvement.

Table 4.1 Summary of Empathy Stage Evaluation

Group	Needs and Opinions	Solutions Provided by "Fanous"
Fans	They prefer fansubs, seek flexible subscription options, and desire a convenient viewing experience that provides diverse, high-quality content.	"Fanous" offers a platform that integrates multiple services such as "Fanous Play" and "Fanous Plug-in," with a unified subscription via "Fanous Pass" to access a comprehensive anime library.
Fansubbers	They seek recognition for their efforts and the ability to work legally without risking intellectual property violations.	"Fanous" provides a cloud-based subtitle editing tool with features that suit fansubbers, such as adding headnotes and designing on-screen effects, while earning points that can be converted into "Fanous Tokens."
Distributors and Streaming Services	They aim to attract more subscribers, protect content from piracy, and expand their audience.	"Fanous" offers a unified subscription system via "Fanous Pass" and "Fanous Play" to enable legal collaboration with fansubbers. "Fanous Plug-in" allows fansubs to be viewed on their platforms without piracy.
Intellectual Property Holders	They face challenges in protecting their rights, increasing transparency in revenue sharing, and licensing issues.	"Fanous Hub" offers an online marketplace for content licenses, providing transparent reports and ensuring legal and sustainable content distribution.

Table 4.2 Summary of Test Stage Evaluation

Group	Feedback	Suggestions and Improve-ments
Fans	They appreciated community interaction and discussion.	Add information about plot points in the interactive video player.
	They liked "Fanous Pass" for managing subscriptions.	Provide free models besides ads for users who prefer no ads or subscriptions.
	They appreciated legal access to multiple fansubs in one place.	Develop a mobile app for access anytime and an app for large screens.
Fansubbers	They appreciated the recognition of their efforts and earning income through points.	Improve subtitle editor interface, add advanced visual effects tools, and AI assistant.
	They liked direct interaction with fans to improve translation.	Create a closed community for fansubbers to share tips and organize work.
Distributors and Streaming Services	They expressed satisfaction with collaboration with fansubbers and unified subscriptions.	Ensure subtitle quality with precise evaluation and approval mechanisms.
	They found "Fanous" especially useful for platforms lacking subtitles.	Use "Fanous Hub" to officially hire and evaluate fansubbers.
Intellectual Property Holders	They were pleased with improved collaboration through "Fanous Hub" for tracking licensing and income reports.	Support smaller companies to reach global markets and translate their works.
	They preferred to deal with distributors and streaming services instead of fans.	"Fanous" can act as an intermediary between IP holders and fansubbers to ensure quality.

User Acceptance Evaluation of Fanous:

To evaluate user acceptance of the platform and its features, a survey was conducted that included a question measuring participants' willingness to use the platform as an alternative to piracy sites, based on a five-point Likert scale, where the ratings range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results provide valuable insights into how the platform is perceived among anime fans, as well as the opportunities and challenges it faces. Through data analysis, the distribution of responses was obtained, reflecting the participants' tendencies toward using the platform.

Table 4.3 Likert Scale Distribution for User Acceptance of Fanous

Value	Description	Responses	Percentage (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	1	4.5%
2	Disagree	0	0.0%
3	Neutral	7	31.8%
4	Agree	2	9.1%
5	Strongly Agree	12	54.5%
Total		22	100%

From this analysis, the results show that 63.6% of participants agreed or strongly agreed to use the platform. On the other hand, 31.8% of participants were neutral, indicating some hesitation or uncertainty. The rejection rate was very low at 4.5%, suggesting that very few were opposed to the idea of the platform, which reflects broad initial acceptance with only minor objections that may be linked to personal factors or reservations about the concept itself.

To calculate the overall tendency, the following equation was used:

$$\text{Average} = \frac{\sum(\text{value} \times \text{number of responses})}{\text{total responses}}$$

The result was 4.09, reflecting a clear tendency toward positive acceptance of the platform.

These results indicate that "Fanous" has significant potential to attract a wide user base if certain technical aspects are improved and its benefits are clarified. The high percentage of positive ratings suggests strong acceptance of the platform, offering a promising opportunity to expand its reach as a legal alternative to piracy sites.

4.2. Limitations

The "Fanous" ecosystem faces limitations that impact its performance and effectiveness in delivering a comprehensive and integrated user experience. Despite the innovations and features offered by Fanous, several areas require improvements to overcome current challenges. In this section, we will review some of the main limitations faced by Fanous, which require innovative solutions to overcome and improve the user experience.

Limited availability of Fanous Plug-in for browsers only:

Fanous Plug-in faces a significant challenge as it is only available for browsers on computers, making it ineffective when used on mobile, tablets, and TV screen apps. This limits users' access to subtitles and interactive video player features in other streaming services when using these devices, reducing the system's effectiveness in providing a comprehensive and integrated viewing experience. To maximize benefits, it is essential to develop a version compatible with mobile, tablet, and TV apps, allowing users to enjoy an integrated experience regardless of the device they use.

Using the subtitle editor with limited internet connectivity:

Fanous users, particularly fansubbers, may face difficulties using the subtitle editor during internet outages or in cases of slow connections. The system relies heavily on cloud connectivity, making it unsuitable for regions with weak internet infrastructure. This may drive users to revert to traditional subtitle methods or even rely on piracy sites to download raw video files for offline subtitle creation. To overcome this issue, functionalities that enable offline work can be developed,

such as temporarily storing files on computers through an application that prevents file copying and sharing, allowing work to be continued and subtitles to be uploaded once the connection is restored.

Bypassing ads via ad blockers:

The issue of bypassing ads through ad blockers poses a significant challenge for Fanous, as the system relies on ads as part of its revenue model. However, many users rely on ad-blocking software, reducing the effectiveness of these ads and impacting potential revenue. Fanous needs to develop innovative techniques to ensure ads appear effectively without being bypassed by ad blockers, such as stopping the service if ad-blocking tools are activated. One possible solution is to offer alternative revenue models other than ads, such as integrating anime merchandise stores and goods into the video player and anime page through a product placement feature, where specific products or brands appear in the video associated with a character, like their clothes and accessories, or certain products shown on the screen and made available in stores as purchasable items. Viewers often respond indifferently or even positively to this, as it does not interrupt their watching experience, creating a sustainable income source for the platform and profit for the stores when viewers click on the product and purchase it using Fan Tokens through the Fanous wallet.

AI Challenges and Its Impact on Human Fansubbing:

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) presents a significant challenge to the Fanous model, which relies heavily on human fansubbers. While AI translation still struggles with handling complex linguistic nuances, especially in Arabic, such as distinguishing between gender-specific forms and interpreting similar expressions, its ongoing development requires close observation. Effective AI-based translation demands contextual understanding that goes beyond textual interpretation to include video analysis. However, automated translations often fall short of delivering the emotional depth, creativity, and cultural sensitivity essential to align with the unique identity of anime and its audience. Despite these limitations, the potential for AI to eventually replace human subtitlers underscores the need for proactive evaluation of its progress and addressing its potential im-

plications for the subtitling industry.

The persistence of piracy sites and resistance to change:

The Fanous model faces significant challenges in resisting change and the persistence of piracy sites. The reliability of fansubbers may threaten the acceptance of this model by intellectual property holders and streaming services. Some users also prefer piracy sites due to the lack of restrictions or ads, making it difficult to attract them to a legal platform like Fanous. To overcome this issue, Fanous offers substantial financial compensation to those who watch ads, encouraging them to continue viewing them. Additionally, Fanous can provide alternatives to ads, such as integrating anime merchandise stores and products into the video player and anime page, creating a sustainable income for the platform. Furthermore, Fanous can offer training programs to ensure subtitle quality and issue professional certificates for fansubbers, establish partnerships with streaming services to support the adoption of the model, and support small companies and studios through crowdfunding for their projects. Moreover, focusing on old and classic anime works that have not received their due licensing through streaming services can be another strategy. Through these strategies, Fanous can overcome resistance to change and achieve full adoption of the model among all stakeholders.

Given these limitations and challenges, improving and developing the Fanous model is crucial for ensuring its success and sustainability. The next phase requires focusing on future initiatives that can help strengthen this model and expand its scope to include more users and content, contributing to the system's strategic goals and providing a better user experience.

4.3. Future Works

To enhance Fanous's success and expand its range of services, a set of future initiatives is recommended to improve the platform, increase the reliability of fansubbers, and boost collaboration with streaming services and rights holders. These initiatives will contribute to providing a better user experience and ensuring the sustainability of the model.

Developing a Training Program and Academy:

It is recommended to establish a training program and academy dedicated to training fansubbers, where professional certificates and level badges are awarded to evaluate fansubbers and their proficiency. This program will enhance the quality of subtitles provided, add greater reliability to the services, and encourage rights holders to collaborate with certified fansubbers. Fansubbers can upgrade their levels based on their performance, increasing their chances of collaborating with streaming services and securing larger projects.

Integration with Streaming Platforms via API:

It is suggested that streaming platforms be integrated with application programming interfaces (API), allowing subtitles to be added directly through those platforms' applications without the need for the Fanous Plug-in. This integration will be particularly beneficial for Japanese platforms that do not provide subtitles for foreigners or global platforms that lack departments for subtitles in certain languages, making it easier for users to access subtitles and enhancing the value of "Fanous" as a strategic partner.

Integrating Anime Goods and Blu-ray/DVD Stores:

It is proposed that anime merchandise and goods stores be integrated within the platform, enabling users to purchase products directly through integration with the video player and anime page via a product placement feature, where specific products or brands appear in the videos. This model will also be useful in Fanous Plug-in as subscribers to official streaming services who use the browser extension to add Fansub will not encounter any ads interrupting their watching.

Additionally, users can purchase Blu-ray/DVD copies from the anime page with fansubs available in disc or digital formats via a transactional video-on-demand (TVOD) model (buy or rent) through the Fanous wallet. This will provide a sustainable additional revenue source for the platform and offer users a comprehensive and convenient shopping experience.

Future Research on AI Support for Fansubbers:

To ensure the sustainable integration of AI into the fansubbing process without diminishing the role of fansubbers, future research should focus on AI's potential to act as a supportive assistant rather than a replacement. AI can assist in tasks such as providing translations, suggesting terms, and conducting proofreading, using extensive linguistic databases. Furthermore, fansubbers can contribute to training AI systems by providing their subtitles, helping AI improve its understanding of language nuances, cultural context, and best subtitle practices. This collaborative approach where fansubbers refine AI-generated suggestions and contribute to the machine-learning process would ensure that AI complements the expertise and cultural sensitivity brought by fansubbers. Such a model would balance AI's efficiency with human experience, fostering a future where both work together to enhance subtitle quality.

Transforming Fanous Hub into a Video Hosting Platform:

It is recommended that Fanous Hub be transformed into a video hosting platform where rights holders can upload video files for anime episodes and movies. Business licenses will be exchanged within Fanous Hub and integrated into the servers of streaming services, allowing content to be easily added to their platforms. Furthermore, rights holders can redistribute and sell sub-licenses and micro-licenses to other services, television channels, theaters, or fansubbers. This process will be managed by blockchain technology and electronic contracts to ensure transparency and protect rights.

By implementing these future initiatives, Fanous will strengthen its position in the anime streaming market, ensure the delivery of high-quality services, and achieve broader collaboration with various stakeholders. This will contribute to developing the fansub ecosystem and achieving long-term sustainability of the model, benefiting all parties involved in this sector.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The Fanous model aims to legitimize anime fansubbing and combat piracy by integrating fansubbers with legal streaming services. The model relies on innovative solutions that enhance the viewing experience and promote legal access to anime while offering opportunities for fansubbers to gain recognition and sustainable income. Through this model, users can legally access multiple fan-made subtitles, contributing to the reduction of piracy rates.

Evaluation results regarding fan acceptance of the model showed widespread support. Participants expressed a willingness to use "Fanous" as an alternative to piracy sites, reflecting a positive response to the concept. The analysis revealed strong acceptance of the platform, though some participants expressed hesitation, indicating the need for further technical improvements and clearer communication of the model's benefits.

Fansubbers welcomed the idea, as the model provides them with the opportunity for recognition and sustainable income, thereby strengthening their position within the legal streaming ecosystem. Distributors and streaming services were optimistic about the potential for improved collaboration and legal integration of fansubs while highlighting the importance of maintaining high-quality subtitles and ensuring that the system did not compromise the user experience. IP holders showed no interest in direct engagement with fansubbers but were open to working with them through an intermediary that ensures quality and compliance with requirements.

Despite these potentials, the model faces some limitations, such as the limited availability of the "Fanous Plug-in" for browsers only. Additionally, reliance on

cloud connectivity for the subtitle editor creates difficulties in regions with weak internet infrastructure. Ad-blockers also disrupt the ad-based revenue model. These challenges can be overcome by solutions such as integrating with streaming services apps, providing offline functionality, and adopting alternative revenue models like integrating anime merchandise and goods into the video player through product placement. Furthermore, AI presents both a challenge and an opportunity, as it should complement rather than replace human anime translators. There is also resistance from some piracy site users who prefer to remain in an illegal environment. This resistance is a significant barrier, but it can be overcome by offering incentives that encourage them to use the platform.

Looking ahead, future initiatives for "Fanous" aim to enhance the platform's success and expand its services by establishing a certified training program for anime fansubbers, integrating the platform with streaming services through APIs, and developing a model for selling anime merchandise and Blu-ray/DVD copies via store integration. It is also recommended to utilize AI as an assistant for fansubbers to improve translation and proofreading while maintaining their human role. Additionally, transforming "Fanous Hub" into a video hosting platform for rights holders to upload content, and exchange rights, using blockchain technology for transparency, is advised. These initiatives will enhance the user experience, contribute to the sustainability of the model, and expand collaboration with various stakeholders in the anime sector.

In conclusion, while the Fanous model faces some challenges, its potential to transform the anime fansubbing landscape is significant. By addressing these limitations and implementing the recommended initiatives, Fanous can establish itself as a sustainable and legally integrated solution that benefits IP holders, streaming services, fansubbers, and the broader anime fan community.

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Appendices

A. Fanous UI/UX Prototype

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Figma Link:

<https://bit.ly/fanous>

