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Faculdade de Motricidade Humana



INTERNSHIP REPORT

Events organisation at SINNERS eSports

**Internship report written with the aim of obtaining a Master's Degree in Sports
Management**

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The writing of this report marks the closing of an important chapter in my academic career, with the conclusion of my master's degree in sports management at the Faculty of Human Kinetics. This degree represents the acquisition of academic expertise in sports and management of sports organisations. This is a very important milestone in my future as a professional, and is something I have always sought to achieve after completing the degree in Management at the School of Technology and Management (STM).

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Abstract

Gaming events have a relevance that goes beyond simple temporary social gatherings, acting as spaces where gamer's values, passions, and connections converge, creating an atmosphere that fosters the sharing of experiences and knowledge. These events not only reflect existing culture but also shape it, promoting values such as inclusion, diversity, and collaboration and offering a ground where gamer communities can express their identities and influence the narrative of the industry as a whole. Moreover, gaming events are often at the vanguard of technological evolution, driving technological development and enriching player interactions. The present report hereby describes the accomplishment of an international internship in the events department at the SINNERS eSports, within the scope of the master's degree in Sports Management at the Faculty of Human Kinetics at the University of Lisbon. In this report, an overview of the events department will be presented, as well as the process of planning and executing eSports events and tournaments, addressing relevant theoretical issues and aspects. These concepts are then complemented by a description of the activities developed during the internship, culminating with the main conclusions, limitations, and suggestions drawn based on work experience during the internship.

Keywords: SINNERS eSports; czech gaming scene; eSports; eSports events; eSports organisations; eSports tournaments; gaming; competitive gaming; event management; sports management;

Resumo

Os eventos de videogames têm uma dimensão que vai para além de simples encontros sociais temporários, atuando como espaços onde se juntam valores, paixões e ligações entre intervenientes, criando uma atmosfera promotora da partilha de experiências e conhecimentos. Estes eventos não só refletem a cultura existente como também a moldam, promovendo valores como a inclusão, a diversidade e a cooperação e oferecendo um espaço onde as comunidades de jogadores podem expressar as suas identidades e influenciar a narrativa da indústria como um todo. Além disso, os eventos de videogames estão frequentemente na vanguarda da tecnologia, impulsionando o desenvolvimento tecnológico e enriquecendo as interações dos jogadores. O presente relatório descreve a realização de um estágio internacional no departamento de eventos dos SINNERS eSports, no âmbito do mestrado em Gestão do Desporto da Faculdade de Motricidade Humana, Universidade de Lisboa. Neste relatório, será apresentada uma visão geral do departamento de eventos, bem como o processo de planeamento e execução de eventos e torneios de eSports, abordando questões e aspetos teóricos relevantes. Estes conceitos são depois complementados por uma descrição das atividades desenvolvidas durante o estágio, culminando com as principais conclusões, limitações e sugestões retiradas com base na experiência adquirida durante o estágio.

Palavras-chave: SINNERS eSports; cenário de videogames checo; eSports; eventos de eSports; organizações de eSports; torneios de eSports; videogames; videogames competitivos; gestão de eventos; gestão do desporto;

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Abbreviations

BDM – Business Development Manager

BYOPC – Bring Your Own Personal Computer

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CGO – Chief Gaming Officer

CMO – Chief Marketing Officer

COO – Chief Operating Officer

CS:GO – Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

DOTA – Defense of the Ancients

ESL – Electronic Sports League

FHK – Faculty of Human Kinetics

FPS – First-Person Shooter

GEF – Global eSports Federation

HLTV – Half-Life Television

IeSF – International eSports Federation

LAN – Local Area Network

PC – Personal Computer

PIL – Polytechnic Institute of Leiria

RTS – Real-Time Strategy

STM – School of Technology and Management

UL – University of Lisbon

1. Introduction

The gaming environment has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, moving from a small hobby to a global cultural phenomenon with a deep impact on many areas of modern society. At the centre of this transformational journey are video gaming events, which have emerged as key platforms to boost community engagement, drive innovation in the industry, and shape gaming culture. As pointed out by Steinkuehler and Duncan (2008), these events transcend the virtual world, creating environments where participants not only compete but also establish real connections that go beyond the event itself. This sense of connection, made easier by the physical presence of participants, generates a feeling of fellowship and shared experiences, emphasising the inherent social dimension of games, which is amplified in the context of events (Witkowski, 2017). Furthermore, the close relationship between gaming events and the gaming industry is extremely relevant (Taylor, 2018). Taylor emphasises how these gatherings act as spaces of innovation, where emerging technologies, game mechanics, and storytelling are presented to an eager audience. This perspective is closely aligned with the idea that gaming events operate as dynamic showcases that set the course of the industry's evolution, by unveiling new games, virtual reality demonstrations, and the launch of revolutionary hardware during these events.

The gaming events organised by SINNERS eSports have played a leading role in the Czech gaming scene, leaving an undeniable mark that transcends the boundaries of the organisation. With an approach centred on community and innovation, these events have substantially boosted the growth and recognition of the Czech gaming scene (Murko, 2022).

SINNERS eSports, through their initiatives, have demonstrated a clear commitment to strengthening the Czech gaming scene. The organisation not only promotes high-level competitive tournaments but also strives to create immersive experiences that appeal to a wide range of gamers and enthusiasts. These events, held in multiple cities across the country, have played a crucial role in promoting gaming culture and creating spaces where gamers can connect and share their passion. SINNERS eSports' influence extends beyond the events themselves, leaving a lasting mark on the country's gaming culture. The organisation serves as a beacon of innovation and progress by introducing new ideas and trends to the events, contributing to the ongoing evolution of the Czech gaming scene, and inspiring other event organisers to strive to offer ever more enriching experiences.

1.1. Internship Overview

This report, developed within the scope of the Master in Sports Management at the Faculty of Human Kinetics at the University of Lisbon (FHK/UL), portrays the internship carried out at SINNERS eSports (a Czech company launched with the intention to create one of the first fully professional eSports teams in the Czech Republic and Slovakia). This internship, held in Prague, began in the first week of April 2023, with the main area of focus being the Events department at the Czech organisation. The workload of this period was 40 hours per week, and when tournaments or events related to SINNERS took place, my presence and participation were often required, because as we will see throughout this report, the management and organisation of events were part of my tasks during the internship.

During this time, I had the opportunity to be part of a passionate and dynamic team, having been given a set of responsibilities that gave me the possibility to work in the following areas of intervention:

- **Event planning and execution:** Actively participating in these activities allowed me to gain hands-on experience in coordinating event logistics, managing on-site operations, and solving unforeseen challenges. From the initial brainstorming meetings, where I had the opportunity to contribute creative ideas for the theme and concept of the events, to the development of detailed plans, I could experience the complete process of creating eSports events.
- **Industry analysis:** I was able to conduct market research and analyse industry reports, which provided a deeper understanding of the eSports ecosystem, popular games, and emerging trends. This knowledge was fundamental in identifying future opportunities for event planning and marketing strategies.
- **Direct communication with stakeholders:** Throughout the internship, I engaged with players, fans, and other stakeholders, gaining insights into their perspectives and preferences. I could negotiate contracts, evaluate proposals, and ensure expectations were aligned to ensure the quality and success of events while maintaining a positive and professional relationship with all parties involved.

1.2. Main goals of the internship

These tasks were carried out in order to achieve the goals defined for the realization of this international internship, such as:

- **Fan Experience:** The main goal of the SINNERS events is to provide a memorable and exciting experience for the fans, through interactive activities, opportunities to meet players, and unique experiences.
- **Increasing the Fan Base:** Events are an excellent opportunity to attract new followers and expand the fan base, so the organisation of captivating and differentiated events also sought to gain the attention of new audiences interested in eSports.
- **Brand Promotion:** Events also sought to act as a platform to establish and strengthen partnerships with other organisations, sponsors, game developers, and industry influencers.

1.3. Report structure and purpose

Regarding its structure, this report consists of four parts and aims to portray the experience of the work developed within the scope of the international internship carried out at SINNERS eSports.

In the initial phase, an introduction is made that presents a general overview of the context in which SINNERS operates, as well as the topics that will be discussed in the report, the objectives and tasks of the internship, and the structure of the report itself.

The second section corresponds to a theoretical contextualization of the topics related to the internship, making a literature review relevant to the area in which I had the opportunity to work, the Events.

In the next part, a detailed presentation and characterization of the sports organisation, SINNERS eSports, is made. The aspects and tasks experienced during the practical component of the internship are also explored and described so that it is possible to relate them to the topics and theoretical concepts that are defined in the previous point.

In the last phase, conclusions are drawn and limitations resulting from the experience acquired during the internship are defined. Finally, some improvements to be made are suggested in order to contribute to the future actions of SINNERS eSports as an eSports organisation.

2. Professional Framework

Professional practice plays a fundamental role in developing and improving the skills and knowledge acquired throughout my academic journey. This internship represents a significant milestone in my studies and provides the opportunity to apply theories and concepts learnt in a real work environment.

2.1. Macro context

2.1.1. Concept of eSports

According to the International eSports Federation (IeSF, n.d.), eSports is described as “a competitive sport performed in a virtual environment in which physical and mental abilities are exercised to create victory conditions through generally accepted rules. It involves a wide range of games of various genres and players compete against each other at

a professional level". The Global eSports Federation (GEF), meanwhile, defines eSports as a form of sport in which the primary aspects it is facilitated by electronic systems; the input of players and teams and the output of the eSports system are mediated by human-computer interfaces. Hilvoorde and Pot (2016), in turn, understand eSports as the practice of electronic games that involve fundamental motor skills, such as hand control and eye-hand coordination, in a competitive context.

2.1.2. History of eSports

The origins of eSports can be traced back to the 1970s when video games began to gain popularity and the first electronic gaming competitions emerged (Kline, 2017). During this time, video games were mainly played in arcades and arcade halls, where players would gather to challenge each other in electronic games (Lowood, 2009). A major milestone was the release of Pong in 1972 by Atari, considered one of the first commercially successful electronic games (Müller & Deterding, 2018). Pong was a digital table tennis game, and its success led to the popularisation of video games and the establishment of arcades around the world (Taylor, 2018). As the popularity of video games grew, gamers began competing in arcades to demonstrate their skills. Games such as Space Invaders (1978) and Pac-Man (1980) became cultural phenomena, drawing crowds to arcade machines (Wolf, 2012). Although competitions in the 1970s were not as formalised as they are today, they laid the foundation for the culture of eSports, where players challenged each other in popular games, setting records and competing for the best score (Chaloner, 2019). These informal

tournaments, often held at local arcades, were the starting point for competitive competition in electronic gaming (Wolf, 2012).

However, it was in the 1990s that eSports began to gain recognition and develop as a competitive scenario (Kerr, 2012). A major milestone was the release of fighting games such as *Street Fighter II* (1991) and *Mortal Kombat* (1992). These games, available in arcades and home consoles, quickly gained popularity and became popular choices for eSports competitions. In addition to fighting games, first-person shooter games also began to gain prominence. The release of games such as *Doom* (1993) and *Quake* (1996) brought a new dimension to eSports, with players competing in online and offline multiplayer matches. These games were fundamental to the growth of the competitive eSports scene, with organised tournaments and cash awards (Consalvo, 2019). Another factor driving the growth of eSports in the 1990s was the proliferation of real-time strategy (RTS) games, such as *Warcraft II* (1995) and *StarCraft* (1998). These games required advanced tactical and strategic skills, and players engaged in fierce competition both online and offline. The success of these games helped solidify the eSports landscape and attract a loyal fan base (Kow et al., 2020). During the 1990s, eSports began to professionalise, with the formation of organisations and leagues dedicated to promoting and organising competitions. The Cyberathlete Professional League, founded in 1997, was one of the first organisations to hold large eSports tournaments, offering significant prize money and attracting professional players (Borowiecki & Fagerberg, 2017).

The 2000s was a period of rapid growth and evolution for eSports, with technological advances and changes in the way games were played and broadcast. In addition to RTS

games, FPS games also gained prominence in the 2000s, with games such as Counter-Strike (1999) and Call of Duty (2003) becoming popular for eSports competitions, making it easier for players to form teams and participating in tournaments around the world (Kücklich, 2010). The 2000s also saw the emergence of professional organisations dedicated to eSports such as the Korean eSports Association (KeSPA) and the Major League Gaming (MLG), which played a key role in formalising eSports competitions and training professional players, as well as organising tournaments, establishing rules and regulations, and helping to raise the level of professionalism in the competitive scene (Kerr, 2012). LAN parties, where players would gather on a local area network to compete against each other, played a crucial role in the formation of eSports. Made popular in the 2000s, such events offered a community sense and bonding between players (Taylor, 2012). Furthermore, according to Witkowski (2019), the growth of eSports was driven by the widespread adoption of reliable internet connection and the emergence of online multiplayer games, enabling gamers to be able to compete remotely and connect themselves with the worldwide audience. According to Taylor (2018), eSports evolution is deeply linked to the development of major gaming genres that have attracted a large number of players and spectators. Per the same author, in 2003 the release of Dota and its sequel, Dota 2, in 2013, combined with the rise of League of Legends in 2009, boosted eSports into the mainstream and made multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) games more popular. Such games are characterised by strategic gameplay, team dynamics, and high levels of skill, making them propitious for competitive play (Schmidt & Luetkenhorst, 2017).

2.1.3. eSports Events, with a focus on CS:GO

The world of eSports has grown exponentially in recent years, becoming a global phenomenon that attracts millions of spectators and participants (Herpin, 2020). At the centre of this rapid growth is the diverse and engaged audience that eSports events attract. Although eSports enthusiasts come from all age groups, there is a significant concentration in the 18-34 age group (Newzoo, 2020). However, eSports are not just a game for young people. According to Evolver (2021), it has also managed to attract older viewers, and a demographic diversity remains to expand as eSports gain wider acceptance. Furthermore, historically, eSports have been dominated by men, but this situation is changing rapidly. Hamari et al. (2021) shows that the gender gap in eSports is narrowing, reflecting a more inclusive and diverse community. Another common characteristic among eSports enthusiasts is their knowledge of technology, being comfortable navigating digital platforms, engaging in online communities, and actively participating in discussions related to eSports events (Hamari et al., 2017). In addition, the eSports audience is known for its global reach, where eSports events attract viewers from all over the world, with a significant audience in regions such as Asia, Europe, and North America (Nielsen, 2019). This global audience presents unique opportunities for sponsors and international brands looking to expand their market reach (Seo et al., 2020). But, behind the thrilling matches lie well-defined objectives and goals that steer the course of eSports events. At the heart of eSports tournaments and leagues is the pursuit of competitive excellence, where organisers strive to provide a stage where the world's top players and teams can showcase their skills, gameplay, and strategy (Rambusch & Lorenzen, 2019). Taylor (2018) points out that revenue generation is a core objective of eSports events, encompassing ticket sales, merchandise, and media rights. The goal is to

create a financially sustainable model for eSports events and organisations, enabling continued growth and investment in this industry. Esports events also aim to build a sense of community among fans, in order to create a loyal and engaged fanbase that actively supports the eSports ecosystem, contributing to its vitality (Hamari et al., 2017). For all of this to be possible and become a reality, there needs to be a great deal of planning and behind-the-scenes work so that the events are successful (Seo et al., 2020). It all starts with methodical planning, where organisers meticulously map out the design of the event, outlining every aspect, from structure and timing to logistics and finances (Rambusch & Lorenzen, 2019). According to the same authors, the choice of venue is the next step, where factors such as accessibility, capacity, and technological infrastructure are weighed up and taken into account. Meanwhile, Taylor (2018) emphasises that it is imperative to ensure that the venue aligns with the unique technical demands of eSports – including high-speed internet and cutting-edge streaming capabilities. Having selected the venue and knowing how many people the event can host, drawing up the tournament format is what comes next, choosing the structure of the competition – covering brackets, group stages, and playoffs (Witkowski & Zdanowski, 2020). In addition, according to Johnson (2020), a detailed rulebook is also created, explaining the specific regulations of the game, the conduct of the players, and the resolution of disputes, in order to guarantee a fair and equal environment.

Then, once the event has been structured, it's time to present it to sponsors, who are essential for the event to happen (Lee & Schoenstedt, 2011). In this way, Tae (2020) emphasises the relevance of developing effective marketing campaigns, which include social media engagement and interactions with fans that are vital to promoting public involvement

and the visibility of the event. The success of eSports events also depends to a large extent on the quality of their production.. According to Lee et al. (2020), it is essential to hire a competent production team to capture the essence of the action, provide insightful commentary, and guarantee a perfect viewing experience in order to maintain viewer loyalty. Rambusch and Lorenzen (2019) highlight how important it is to develop meticulous logistical planning, covering ticketing, transport, and on-site services, to ensure a smooth and hasslefree event experience. Simultaneously security measures, both online and at the venue, are essential to safeguard against threats and ensure the safety of players and fans (Seo et al., 2020).

The conclusion of an eSports event marks the beginning of a new chapter -learning and growth, where post-event analysis is indispensable for organisers to comprehend what worked and what can be improved (Lee et al., 2020). By assimilating feedback and harnessing data-driven insights, organisers pave the way for continuous improvement, ensuring future events are even more extraordinary (Taylor, 2018).

For instance, CS:GO has evolved into one of the most popular FPS eSports titles, captivating audiences with its strategic gameplay and high-stakes competitions. To organise these events effectively, multiple tournament structures have emerged, each with its own set of rules and objectives (Goslin, 2020). According to HLTV (2021), there are four tournament structures commonly employed in CS:GO:

- **Single-Elimination Bracket:** The Single-Elimination is one of the most straightforward tournament structures. Teams compete in a bracket, and each match is a knockout game, meaning that a loss results in elimination from the tournament.

This format highlights the importance of consistency and performing well in every match, being commonly used in the early stages of tournaments or as a qualifier format.

- **Double-Elimination Bracket:** In the Double-Elimination, teams have two chances before being eliminated. A loss sends a team to the lower bracket, where they can battle their way back into the finals. This format provides a safety net for teams and often results in more competitive and fair outcomes, being commonly used in mid to late stages of tournaments.
- **Swiss System:** The Swiss System is a unique structure where teams with similar records face off in each round. Teams that win progress while those with similar records compete against each other. This system aims to provide balanced matches throughout the tournament, being known for producing exciting storylines as teams fight their way to the top.
- **Round Robin:** In a Round-Robin format, every team plays every other team in a series of matches, and points are awarded based on wins, draws, or losses. This format aims to showcase consistent performance over a series of matches and it's commonly used in league-style tournaments where teams compete over an extended period.

While the core of CS:GO's success lies in the skill of its players, effective marketing and promotion strategies are vital in ensuring the success and visibility of the events (Borcherding, 2020). One of the cornerstones of CS:GO event promotion is tapping into the power of social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Discord, and Facebook (Borcherding et al., 2017). These types of platforms are used by event organisers to provide

real-time updates, share match highlights, and offer behind-the-scenes content, all of which contribute to creating a vibrant and engaged fan community. Another key element of CS:GO event promotion is collaboration with influencers and eSports players, amplifying its reach events and creating excitement and anticipation among their followers (Seo et al., 2020). Live streaming of CS:GO tournaments on platforms like Twitch and YouTube Gaming has also become standard practice (Hamari et al., 2017). These platforms not only broadcast matches but also offer interactive features like live chat, allowing fans to engage with each other and the event itself. It's a two-way street where viewers can react in real time, adding to the thrill of the experience. Community engagement as a fan-centric approach has been gaining relevance, through soliciting feedback, holding Q&A sessions with players, and organising fan meet-ups (Johnson et al., 2020). This content not only promotes the event but also helps build narratives around players and teams, giving fans a deeper connection to the competition (Krattinger et al., 2020).

At the heart of CS:GO's success and growth as an eSports giant are the strategic alliances formed through sponsorships and partnerships, which provide essential resources for event production, player remuneration, and the overall running of tournaments (Liu, 2021). These sponsorships manifest themselves in various ways, covering title sponsorships, team sponsorships, and product sponsorships (Borcherding et al., 2017). One of the main objectives of sponsoring CS:GO events is to establish brand affiliation: by aligning themselves with high-profile events and teams, sponsors enhance their brand image and connect with a highly engaged and tech-savvy audience (Pegoraro & O'Reilly, 2019).

Furthermore, sponsors often organise contests, giveaways, and fan experiences, forging a direct link with the CS:GO audience as these activations not only deepen fan involvement but also create positive associations between sponsors and the community (Hoffman et al., 2019). According to Choi (2017), partnerships within CS:GO events extend beyond conventional sponsorships, where event organisers frequently establish strategic partnerships with brands that share their values and target audience involving a profound collaboration, such as joint marketing campaigns and exclusive product integrations. Finally, Pegoraro and O'Reilly (2019) also argue that sponsorship integration is not limited to advertising space during broadcasts. Sponsors often collaborate with game developers to seamlessly integrate their products or brands directly into the game, including in-game item skins, banners in virtual arenas, and customised player gear.

While the spotlight in CS:GO tournaments is on the players and the action-packed matches, the seamless execution of these events relies heavily on meticulous event logistics (Schwartz, 2018). According to Pitts and Stotlar (2018), the most critical logistical decision is about choosing the right venue, which must accommodate the audience, players, production crew, and sponsors. Furthermore, due to the robust technology infrastructure, high-speed internet, server stability, and backup systems are imperative in these events, in order to have uninterrupted gameplay (Himmelstein, 2017). As Andersson (2016) demonstrates, security is paramount and event organisers must work closely with local law enforcement to ensure the safety of attendees and players. This means crowd management strategies, such as designated entry and exit points. Schwartz (2018), points out that ensuring player well-being is a logistical challenge, where players should have access to practice areas,

restrooms, and comfortable seating, as well as catering services providing nutritious meals to maintain their energy levels. According to the same author, ticketing logistics are also the organisers' responsibility, involving online sales, ticket scanning, and entry management, as well as engagement areas such as autograph sessions and merchandise stalls.

Kane, (2019) asserts that CS:GO tournaments are not just about the players; they are about the fans who create an electric atmosphere, and its success relies on prioritising audience engagement, creating an unforgettable experience for viewers and attendees. For this purpose, CS:GO tournaments use multiple interactive viewing platforms, such as Twitch, YouTube Gaming, and dedicated event websites, offering features such as live chat, polls, and real-time statistics, allowing fans to actively interact with the event and other spectators (Hamari et al., 2017). Something highly valued by fans, and which should be taken into account by organisers, is behind-the-scenes content, such as player interviews, team profiles, and glimpses behind the scenes (Johnson et al., 2020). When it comes to a physical event, fan engagement zones are common, offering activities such as player meet-and-greets, merchandise stalls, and game setups, in order to create a sense of community among attendees (Johnson et al., 2020).

As any other event, eSports event organisers face a number of challenges that need to be analysed in order to minimise them during the event (Johnson et al., 2019). One of the primary issues that eSports organisers face, includes technical glitches and server malfunctions that can disrupt gameplay and viewing experiences (Choi et al., 2018). As Borcharding et al., (2021) point out, CS:GO has a global following, and accommodating regional differences in terms of time zones and cultural preferences is challenging. Schwartz

(2018) completes this thought by mentioning that extended tournaments can lead to viewer fatigue, and to address this, compact tournament formats, viewer-friendly schedules, and efficient production are employed to maintain viewer interest.

In a dynamic and rapidly evolving world of CS: GO events, it is imperative that event organisers, sponsors, and stakeholders strive for, define and measure success (Reardon, 2019). According to Kane (2019), viewership numbers, including peak concurrent viewers, average viewers, and total hours watched, are essential success metrics, where high viewership indicates the event's popularity and impact, attracting sponsors and advertisers. Borcharding et al., (2021), on the other hand, highlight that sponsorship return on investment is gauged through metrics like brand exposure, click-through rates, and social media engagement. As per Hilvert-Bruce et al., (2018) event revenue is a crucial success indicator and it includes ticket sales, merchandise, and digital item purchases. In order to get an honest opinion from the participants, surveys, social media sentiment analysis, and feedback forums are a must. This way, organisers can measure fan satisfaction and engagement and have better events in the future (Choi et al., 2018).

2.1.4. eSports events organisation

The field of eSports has seen an explosive rise in popularity, with millions of fans around the world tuning in to watch competitive video games (Borcharding et al., 2022). Behind these events, there is a complex set of motivations that lead entities to organise eSports competitions. According to Choi et al. (2018), there are three main reasons that lead to the organisation of these events:

- **Economic Viability and Revenue Generation:** The meteoric rise of eSports as a global phenomenon has not only redefined competitive gaming but also transformed it into a robust and lucrative industry. At the heart of this transformation is the economic viability and revenue generation potential that has enticed a multitude of entities into the eSports arena (Lee & Kim, 2019). eSports events do not rely on a single source of revenue. Instead, they tap into a diverse set of revenue channels that include ticket sales, merchandise, sponsorships, advertising, broadcast rights, among others (Hamari et al., 2017). In this way, there is the ability to harness multiple sources of income, minimising risk and increasing the potential for financial success (Wagner, 2019). The growth trajectory of the eSports industry is proof of its economic viability. With millions of fans and a global presence, eSports are on track to become a billiondollar industry, where the market's growth potential attracts investors and organisers, all keen to secure a slice of the pie (Gurr et al., 2021).
- **Market and Branding Exposure:** eSports events are not merely gatherings of gaming enthusiasts; they serve as potent platforms for market exposure (Törhönen et al., 2017). In the world of eSports, the lines between entertainment and advertising blur, creating a dynamic marketing landscape that continually evolves. eSports have a global audience, transcending geographical boundaries and attracting diverse demographic groups (Park et al., 2018). This broad spectrum of age groups, from teenagers to adults, encourages the organisation of these events, as it allows both organisers and brands to target specific demographics and regions (Lee & Kim, 2019). Major brands and technology companies often partner with event organisers,

encompassing not only financial support but also collaborative marketing efforts. These partnerships are strategically designed to resonate with the esports community (Borcherding et al., 2021).

- **Fan Engagement and Loyalty:** The world of eSports goes far beyond what happens during competition; it's a vibrant ecosystem in which fan involvement and loyalty play a key role. In eSports, loyalty has a profound influence, where loyal fans are more than spectators; they are active members of a community. This sense of belonging, leveraged through in-person events, is a testament to their loyalty and dedication (Sjöblom et al., 2017). According to Smith and Wiggins (2020), loyal fans become brand advocates, proudly wearing the team's merchandise, showing off the brand's content and defending their favourite players. This organic promotion has immense value for organisers, brands and the teams, given that these loyal fans are not one-off supporters. They support their chosen teams and players in victories and defeats, a crucial source of motivation for eSports professionals (Lee & Kim, 2019). Consequently, these fans are more likely to spend money on tickets, merchandise and other fan-related content, being a reliable source of revenue and contributing to the financial sustainability of events (Hamari et al., 2017).

Overall, with the constant diversification of content of eSports events and advancement of technologies in the interaction between spectators and the competitions, the demand for event management increases. To better understand and meet such demand in the new generation of eSports events, it is essential to sustain eSports spectators' satisfaction and encourage their revisit intention (Zhu et al., 2021).

2.1.5. eSports events Stakeholders

The ecosystem surrounding eSports involves a diverse set of stakeholders (Schmidt & Luetkenhorst, 2017). According to Hamari (2020), players are the main stakeholders of the eSports ecosystem since they are the major agents responsible for driving the competitive nature of the sport. Competing individually or in teams, representing organisations or sponsors, they strive to achieve excellence, recognition, and winning awards, being the biggest attraction for fans and sponsors Carter and Gibbs (2016). Also playing a vital role in the industry in question, eSports teams and organisations have significant responsibilities in managing, representing, and optimising player performance, as well as building brand recognition, securing sponsorship, and engaging with fans (Sjöblom et al., 2018). Furthermore, their existence and the efforts made contribute to the overall growth, development, and success of the eSports ecosystem. Responsible for planning, coordinating, and executing eSports events, event organisers are also crucial stakeholders for the ecosystem under analysis (Lopes & Almeida, 2019). Having the power to bring together players, sponsors, broadcasters, and fans, organisers handle various aspects, including venue selection, event logistics, marketing, attendee management, and regulation (Seo & Jung, 2021). Important contributors, such as game developers, and publishers are fundamental in the creation and distribution of the video games that form the basis of eSports competitions (Tassi, 2020). They guarantee constant innovation, contributing to the evolution and sustainability of eSports as a worldwide phenomenon (Arnold, 2016). Fans and spectators are crucial stakeholders who fuel the energy and passion around eSports events, driving the growth and success of the industry (Taylor, 2018). Due to their enthusiasm, loyalty, and engagement, by attending live events and online broadcasts, as well as showing support for

their favourite players through social media, they contribute to attracting sponsorship, generating income, and shaping the eSports landscape (Macey et al., 2019). Sponsors play a major role in the financial sustainability of eSports by securing financial support, contributing to prizes, and providing resources, allowing the sector to grow as a business, while gaining in return exposure through branding and marketing opportunities (Hammer et al., 2019). According to Johnson (2020), these can be divided into two categories: endemic sponsors, such as game peripheral companies or game publishers, who are directly linked to the industry; and non-endemic sponsors, including mainstream brands, who do so by recognising the reach and visibility of eSports. Regulative and governing bodies serve as custodians of integrity, fair play, and ethical conduct, fostering a professional and transparent ecosystem that improves both the sustainability and reputation of the sport (Taylor, 2018). These stakeholders establish rules, standards, and guidelines to secure competitive equity, the safety of players, and the prevention of unfair practices (Carter et al., 2016). Broadcasters and streaming platforms are key stakeholders in spreading eSports content across the globe, providing live coverage, commentary, analysis, and interactive experiences that enhance the viewing experience for fans (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). Platforms such as Twitch, YouTube Gaming, and Douyu offer such services, expanding the accessibility and exposure of the sport, and allowing fans from diverse backgrounds to be involved in tournaments (Schmidt & Luetkenhorst, 2017). According to Johnson (2018), media talent and commentators add value to the broadcasts of eSports by providing live commentary, analysis, and entertainment, improving the viewing experience, fan engagement, and storytelling during eSports events. Last but not least, influencers and content creators also contribute to the community of eSports by producing video content and live-streaming games, being important for

trendsetting, attracting viewers, and promoting community engagement in eSports (Mäntymäki & Salo, 2021).

2.1.6. Strategies in the eSports Industry

The eSports industry has been witnessing rapid growth and success, requiring diverse and effective business strategies in order to ensure its success and sustainability (Clarke, 2019). In accordance with Taylor (2018), the player recruitment and development strategies are key for organisations, where they invest in scouting talented players as well as providing them with the necessary resources and support to improve their skills, both on and off the server. As per Güllich and Emrich (2014), this strategy involves talent acquisition, player development programs, coaching staff, and infrastructure, offering career paths, and creating a supportive environment. Furthermore, given the pressure and mental strain, these players are under, organisations seek to ensure the well-being and professional growth of their athletes by prioritising wellness and development strategies for them (Kow, 2021). Taylor (2018) brings up the provision of support systems, mental health resources, career development opportunities, and fair contractual agreements to promote a sustainable and ethical environment for players. Chen et al. (2020) underlines the importance of developing a compelling brand image and implementing effective marketing campaigns, crucial to attracting fans, sponsors, and media attention in eSports. Whereas for Schmidt and Luetkenhorst (2017), organisations have to know-how to leverage various channels, such as social media, content creation, and fan engagement activities, in order to build a unique brand identity and establish a connection with the target audience. These fan engagement and

community-building strategies are fundamental in any organisation, where fans and supporters are the foundation of the organisation (Jenkins, 2008). Vital to the financial sustainability and growth of any business, eSports organisations also outline sponsorship and partnership strategies to secure financial support and gain exposure (Turunen, 2018). The formation of alliances with technology companies, sponsors, game developers, broadcasters, and other event organisers, according to Bezuidenhout and Hassel (2019), provides access to know-how, resources, and networks, creating synergies and opening doors to new opportunities. This leads us to another important approach, the revenue diversification strategy, which is essential for the financial sustainability of eSports organisations (Güllich & Emrich, 2014). According to Sandner et al. (2020), this strategy involves exploring multiple avenues, including media rights, merchandising, content monetization, and licensing deals, thereby reducing dependence on specific revenue streams and increasing financial stability. Consequently, and with the global appeal of eSports, international expansion strategies have gained importance, and it is central to identify target regions, establish local partnerships, and adapt marketing and content strategies to meet the specific cultural preferences of the target audience (Salen & Zimmerman, 2016). Against the backdrop of constant change and evolution, eSports organisations adopt technological innovations in order to maintain their competitiveness (Grohmann & Henninger, 2020). Schmidt and Luetkenhorst (2017) point out the adoption of cutting-edge hardware, software, and streaming technologies as well as the exploitation of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) applications. Technological advances have also led to the adoption of data analytics and insights strategies, enabling informed decision-making and consequently improving player performance and team results Zhang et al. (2019). Schuetz et al. (2020),

states that organisations leverage event data, viewing metrics, and audience behaviour for insights, useful in event planning, marketing strategies, and fan engagement. Seo and Jung (2021) have highlighted the relevance of collaboration with industry stakeholders, governing bodies, and regulatory organisations to develop and enforce rules, anti-doping policies, and codes of conduct to safeguard the competitive integrity and reputation of the sport. Based on Bezuidenhout and Hassel (2019), eSports organisations have focused on integrating ethical and sustainable practices, placing importance on environmental sustainability efforts, community engagement programs, and diversity as well as inclusion initiatives. Showing a strong commitment to environmental and social values, can boost their reputation and promote healthy relationships with stakeholders (Fisher, 2017).

2.1.7. CS:GO Gameplay Details

Counter-Strike, an iconic FPS game, stands as a staple in the eSports landscape (Goslin, 2020). It revolves around strategic team-based combat, where two opposing teams, the “terrorists” and the “counter-terrorists” battle against each other. The primary objective varies based on the game mode but generally encompasses planting/defusing bombs or eliminating the opposing team.

According to ESL (2023), a German eSports organiser and production company, these are the main Rules and Regulations for a CS:GO tournament:

- **Team Structure:** Each team is composed of five players. One team adopts the role of the “terrorists” (T side), while the other embodies the “counter-terrorists” (CT side).

- **Rounds and Triumph:** A standard match comprises multiple rounds, with victory achieved by the team that claims a predefined number of rounds (typically 16). Each round win contributes to the team's overall score.
- **Bomb Defusal (DE) Mode:** The sole competitive game mode is Bomb Defusal (DE). In this mode, the “terrorists” aim to plant explosive devices at designated bomb sites, while “counter-terrorists” strive to thwart this by either defusing planted bombs or eliminating the “terrorists”.
- **Economy:** Players are endowed with an in-game currency to purchase a diverse array of weapons, armour, and equipment at the outset of each round. This currency is earned through various means, including round victories, bomb-related actions, and enemy eliminations.
- **Weapons and Equipment:** Players can select from an extensive arsenal, including pistols, rifles, sniper rifles, and grenades. Additionally, they have the option to equip armour and helmets to enhance their protection.
- **Round Time:** Each round is subject to a time limit (typically around 1 minute and 55 seconds in competitive mode). This timeframe underscores the need for strategic decision-making and efficient execution of objectives.

Still, in accordance with ESL (2023), the following are the main Competition Settings used for a CS:GO tournament:

- **Friendly Fire:** Friendly fire is enabled, meaning that players' attacks can harm their teammates. This setting encourages strategic coordination and careful positioning to avoid accidentally causing damage to allies.
- **No Draws:** Matches do not result in draws. A definitive winner must emerge from each match, ensuring that every encounter produces a clear outcome. If both teams are tied at the end of the regulation rounds, overtime rules are applied to determine the winner.
- **Overtime Rules:** Overtime occurs when both teams have the same number of rounds won at the end of the regulation rounds. Overtime consists of additional rounds where each team takes turns playing both sides (“terrorists” and “counter-terrorists”). The first team to secure a two-round advantage wins the match.
- **Bomb Timer:** In Bomb Defusal (DE) mode, the timer for bomb explosions (40 seconds) and defusals (5 or 10 seconds, depending if you have a defuse kit or not) is set, adding a strategic element to the gameplay. Teams must plan their actions carefully to ensure they have enough time to execute their objectives.
- **Map Selection:** The choice of maps is a critical aspect of competition settings. Map selection and familiarity can heavily influence match outcomes, making the interplay between map knowledge and tactical skill a key aspect of competitive play. At the moment, the map pool is composed of 7 different maps: Mirage, Inferno, Nuke, Anubis, Vertigo, Ancient, and Overpass.

- **Side Switching:** Teams switch sides after a set number of rounds (usually 15 rounds in a standard match). This equalises the advantage of starting as either “terrorists” or “counter-terrorists” and ensures that each team gets the opportunity to play both sides.
- **Pause and Technical Issues:** Teams are typically allowed a limited number of tactical pauses per match. These pauses can be used to discuss strategies, address technical issues, or make adjustments to their gameplay.

2.2. Institutional context

2.2.1. SINNERS eSports Overview

eSports came about as a fast-growing industry that revolutionised the way people engage with video games. With the rise in popularity of online gaming communities and technological advancements, eSports events have become a common phenomenon, attracting millions of players and spectators all over the world. As the industry continues to grow, eSports organisations have gained prominence, offering players and fans the golden chance to attend and enjoy competitive gaming at the highest level. In this section, an analysis will be made of SINNERS, exploring its history, organisational structure, teams and rosters, partnerships and sponsors, performance and achievements, marketing and promotion strategies, event management, challenges and opportunities, and future prospects. This indepth analysis aims to provide a better insight into this dynamic eSports organisation and the impact it has had on the global gaming community.

2.2.2. History

SINNERS eSports, an organisation based in Prague, Czech Republic, entered into the eSports industry in 2020, which marked the beginning of their journey. The SINNERS eSports project was launched with the intention to create one of the first fully professional eSports teams in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with the goal of competing both on the local and international eSports scene (SINNERS, 2023). The Czech organisation works with players, develops their in-game and personality profile, and brings elements of a professional organisation so that the players have the best possible conditions to help the team rise to the top. Since SINNERS' founding, they have quickly gained recognition for their determination, competitive spirit, and remarkable achievements.

2.2.3. Mission, Vision, Values and Goals

According to Sharma and Jindal (2019), mission, vision, values, and goals are crucial elements for the success of an organisation, providing a framework that guides the organization's behaviour and decisions, promoting cohesion and strategic direction.

Mission

The mission establishes the fundamental purpose of the organisation and provides a strategic direction for its daily activities, helping define its focus and guide its decisions and initiatives, ensuring that all efforts are aligned with the organisation's core purpose (Bartlett, 2002). SINNERS' mission is to be a leading organisation in the eSports scene,

representing the Czech Republic and competing at a high level in popular electronic gaming disciplines. Additionally, the organisation seeks to provide exciting experiences to players and fans, build strategic partnerships and create a positive impact on the eSports community (SINNERS, 2023).

Vision

The vision is an aspirational statement that describes the image of success that the organisation wishes to achieve in the long term, serving as a compass to direct the its strategic decisions and initiatives, and aligning all efforts toward the desired future (Bartlett, 2002). SINNERS' vision is to become one of the leading eSports organisations globally recognised for both its competitive achievements and its commitment to the community. Looking forward, the organisation intends to continue growing, expanding its presence globally, and establishing itself as a benchmark in terms of performance, professionalism, and passion for eSports (SINNERS, 2023).

Values

For Fisher and Lovell (2017), values are fundamental principles that direct the actions of the organisation, setting a standard of ethical behaviour and promoting trust among stakeholders. These values are essential in a competitive industry such as eSports, where integrity and respect are key to building lasting relationships and the organisation's reputation. For the organisation under analysis, the main values are the following:

- Excellence: SINNERS eSports strives for excellence in all its activities, from competition in games to the internal management of the organisation. The team is committed to achieving high standards of performance and quality in everything they do (SINNERS, 2023).
- Passion: Passion for gaming is the fuel that drives SINNERS. The organisation prizes the dedication and enthusiasm of its players, employees, and fans, constantly striving to deliver engaging and exciting experiences (SINNERS, 2023).
- Respect: SINNERS fosters an environment of mutual respect, both among its members and in its interactions with the gaming community. The organisation values diversity, inclusion, and respect for everyone's opinions and experiences (SINNERS, 2023).

Goals

Goals are fundamental in an eSports organisation as they provide direction, motivation, performance measurement, strategic guidance, and alignment between team members. They play a crucial role in the success and sustainable growth of the organisation, enabling it to achieve significant results and stand out in a competitive market (David & David, 2020). For SINNERS the main goals are:

- Competing at an international level: SINNERS aim to compete at an international level and excel in major eSports competitions and tournaments around the world. The Czechs seek to be recognised as a high-performance team and compete with the best players and organisations in the global eSports scene (SINNERS, 2023).

- Developing promising talents: SINNERS is committed to identifying and developing promising talents in different disciplines of electronic gaming, within the Czechoslovak scene. The organisation seeks to provide the necessary tools, support, and opportunities for its players to reach their full potential and achieve individual and collective success (SINNERS, 2023).
- Engaging the eSports community: SINNERS values its fan base and the gaming community at large. The organisation aims to engage and connect fans through live streams, social media, in-person events, and other initiatives, creating a vibrant and engaged community around the SINNERS brand (SINNERS, 2023).

Overall, the importance of defining goals, mission, vision, and values in an eSports organisation lies in the fact that they provide a clear sense of purpose, direction, and identity, serving as the basis for decision-making, strategy development, and execution (Mäntymäki, Salo & Kärkkäinen, 2017). Such elements drive the organization's behavior, actions, and aspirations, promoting a strong organisational culture, attracting stakeholders, and positioning the organisation for long-term success in the dynamic world of eSports (Yordanova, Pavlova & Georgiev, 2020).

2.2.4. Organisational Structure and Teams

The organisational structure of a company refers to how it arranges its employees and job positions to achieve its goals and objectives (Daft, 2018). In the concrete case of SINNERS, the CEO is the highest-ranking executive in the organisation and is ultimately responsible for its overall performance and strategic direction. The COO is responsible for

the day-to-day operations and execution of the company's strategic plans, as well as being responsible for overseeing the events department. When it comes to the CMO, he leads the marketing efforts of the company, developing marketing strategies and campaigns to promote the brand and products, having the marketing and social media team under his instructions.

The CGO, on the other hand, is responsible for the core eSports activities, including teams, players, and competition. In short, he oversees the day-to-day operations of the eSports teams. Finally, the BDM is in charge of identifying new business opportunities, fostering partnerships, and creating strategies to drive the organisation's growth.

The figure 1 below represents the organisational structure of SINNERS eSports:

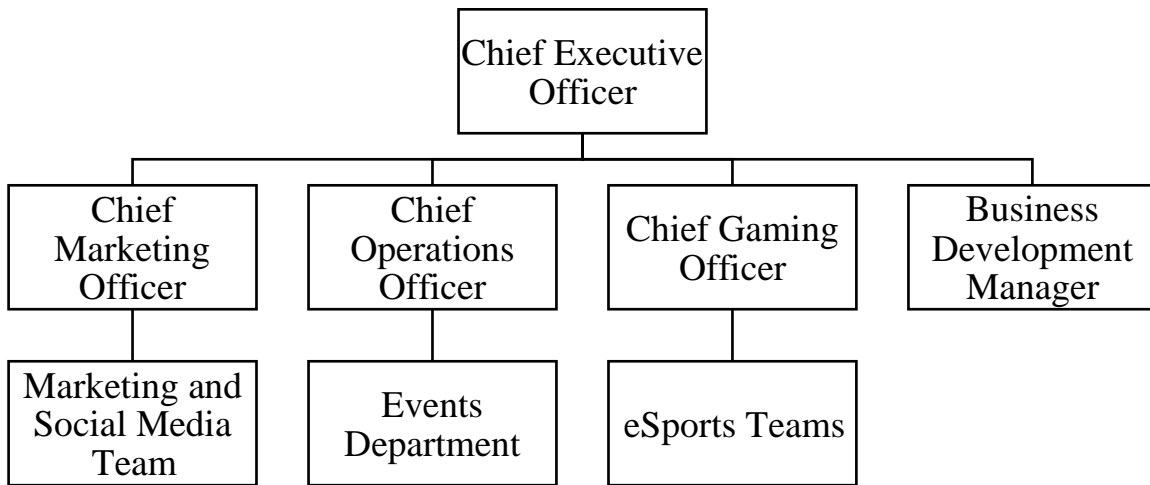


Figure 1. SINNERS eSports organisational structure

Source: SINNERS eSports, 2023

In the early stages of their formation, SINNERS focused on assembling a talented CS:GO team, by strategically recruiting skilled Czechoslovak players who demonstrated exceptional talent in the game. This meticulous approach allowed the organization to form an impressive team capable of competing at a high level, actively participating in local and regional tournaments. Their dedication to training, strategic gameplay, and effective teamwork contributed to their early successes and served as a solid foundation for their future endeavours. SINNERS currently have teams in several popular gaming disciplines, including CS:GO, League of Legends and Trackmania (SINNERS, 2023). Each team has a roster of skilled players that compete in various domestic and international tournaments as well as a coach, who is responsible for defining and planning game strategies, and keeping his players motivated and committed.

2.2.5. Performance and Achievements

SINNERS eSports quickly rose through the ranks of the European competitive eSports scene, achieving significant success in various tournaments, both domestically and internationally. The CS:GO team has been particularly successful, reaching the pinnacle of success by qualifying for the ESL Pro League and reaching the top 19 in the HLTV World Ranking (HLTV, 2023). Currently, they are the champions of the Czech league, having revalidated the title in October last year. SINNERS have also had notable player achievements and awards, including top finishes in individual tournaments and recognition for individual skills. Their performances at these high-profile events have earned them recognition as a rising force within the eSports community.

2.2.6. Partnerships and Sponsors

SINNERS eSports have carefully and successfully cultivated partnerships and secured sponsorships with multiple companies in the eSports industry. As such, these collaborations are playing a major part in helping the organization grow, providing resources, and contributing to its overall success. One of the SINNERS eSports' significant partnerships is with one of the largest gaming peripheral manufacturers and technology companies, SteelSeries. This kind of partnerships guarantees that the players have access to high-quality equipment and cutting-edge technology, allowing them to achieve their best performance during competitions. By collaborating with these industry-leading brands, SINNERS can ensure they stay at the vanguard of technological advancements and provide their teams with a competitive edge. In addition, SINNERS have established strategic partnerships with brands and organizations outside the gaming sector but that share its vision and values. Partnerships with large companies such as Adidas, Rockstar (energy drink), Kaufland (supermarket chain) and Sazka (sports betting) allow for mutual growth and collaborative initiatives. Sponsorships are a crucial aspect of SINNERS eSports' financial support and brand recognition but also contribute to the organization's visibility and exposure. By aligning with these types of entities from different sectors, SINNERS can expand their reach, engage with a larger audience, and further solidify their position in the eSports industry. Additionally, SINNERS collaborate very actively with content creators and streamers who are aligned with their brand and values. These collaborations aid in extending their presence across multiple streaming platforms and social media channels,

allowing SINNERS to connect with a wider audience, engage fans, and build a buzzing community around their brand.

2.2.7. Marketing and Promotion Strategies

SINNERS eSports have implemented a number of marketing and promotional strategies aimed at increasing brand awareness, engaging with its target audience, and building a loyal fan base. These types of strategies encompass a variety of online and offline initiatives designed to maximise their reach and impact within the eSports community. The Czech organization's marketing approach is characterised by its strong online presence, with a total of around 100,000 followers on social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitch, Discord, and TikTok. These platforms are used for content creation, where SINNERS produce high-quality videos, live streams and articles to showcase their gameplay, share insights from their players and coaches, and provide educational and entertaining content for their audience.

By consistently providing engaging and valuable content, SINNERS seek to establish themselves as trustworthy source of entertainment and information within the eSports community. In addition to their online activities, SINNERS actively participate in face-to-face events such as eSports tournaments, conventions, and fan meet-ups in order to engage directly with fans, showcase their players' skills and generate excitement around their brand. Overall, SINNERS eSports employs a comprehensive marketing and promotion strategy that combines online engagement, content creation, influencer partnerships, in-person events, and sponsorship activations. By utilising a combination of digital and

traditional marketing channels, they aim to build a strong brand presence, foster fan loyalty and attract new followers in the competitive eSports scene.

2.3. Overview of the Events Department

The Events Department represents a key part of SINNERS eSports, acting as the driving force behind the organization's landmark and memorable events. Through the internship undertaken, it was possible to comprehensively explore the functions, strategies, and importance of the Events Department at SINNERS eSports, as well as understand its role in driving the success of the organization and establishing a lasting impact on the competitive esports scene. At SINNERS eSports, the events department consists of an Events Director and several event planners. The Events Director is the leader of the department, responsible for overseeing all event-related activities, playing a crucial role in strategic planning, budgeting, and ensuring flawless execution of events. Event planners work, closely with the Director, to plan and organise various events, being responsible for logistics, scheduling, and ensuring that all aspects of the events are well coordinated. Although they are not part of the department, several staff members join the team during the event itself, helping to ensure the smooth running of the event and assisting participants with any questions or problems. As mentioned earlier, the whole process of planning and executing an event involves the other departments of the organization, such as the Content Creation Team, the Sponsorship and Partnership Team, or the Community Engagement Team.

2.3.1. Functions and Roles of the Events Department

The multi-faceted Events Department performs a number of crucial functions, encompassing the organization, execution, and optimization of a diversified range of esports events. Its main duties include:

- **Strategic Planning and Conceptualisation:** The department engages in meticulous strategic planning and conceptualization of events, aligning them with the overall SINNERS eSports vision, brand identity, and marketing objectives. This requires analysing market trends, fan preferences, and industry innovations in order to create immersive experiences that truly resonate with the target audience.
- **Tournament and Event Management:** At the core of their duties, eSports tournament and event management skills are part of the department's DNA. From grassroots competitions to international events, the team takes care of everything from player registration to scheduling and prize distribution, making sure that competitive and well-organised tournaments are held.
- **Live Event Production:** At SINNERS, one of the major responsibilities of the Events Department is the delivery of immersive events in both physical and virtual environments. This makes it crucial to collaborate with production teams to deliver memorable broadcasts that capture the essence of the competitive atmosphere, elevating the viewer experience to new heights.
- **Fan Engagement and Community Building:** Without supporter presence, there would be no point in holding events, as it is the fans who give events soul and life. Understanding this, especially being inserted in the eSports ecosystem, SINNERS'

Events Department is focused on fostering a solid engagement with fans, creating interactive and personalised experiences for them, from meet-and-greets with players to exclusive content and giveaways, cultivating a strong sense of community and brand loyalty.

- **Partnership Activation and Sponsor Integration:** Event platforms are an excellent window to amplify sponsor visibility and generate value for all involved through mutually beneficial initiatives. Collaborating closely with the Partnerships and Marketing teams, the events department makes sure that sponsor assets and brand activations are seamlessly integrated during events.

2.3.2. Significance of the Events Department

As mentioned above, the Events Department has immense relevance in SINNERS eSports. Through the internship carried out, it is important to highlight the following:

- **Brand Amplification and Recognition:** When events are successfully executed, they have the power to act as powerful platforms to amplify the SINNERS eSports brand and raise its recognition on a global scale. As such, it is up to the events department to leave a lasting impression on fans and stakeholders, establishing the organization's identity as a benchmark esports entity in their paradigm.
- **Revenue Generation and Sustainability:** Consequent to the previous point, successful and quality events contribute significantly to revenue generation as they attract sponsors, advertisers, and partnerships, diversifying SINNERS' revenue sources and strengthening their financial sustainability for long-term growth.

- **Competitive Differentiation and Talent Attraction:** The commitment to organising events of quality and excellence highlights SINNERS' desire to stand out from competitors in the competitive esports landscape. In addition, because the organization is focused on growing the Czechoslovak scene, the events also serve as a means of scouting and attracting talent, enabling the Czechs to bring together the best players in the region.
- **Promotion of the Esports Ecosystem:** Through events, SINNERS actively contribute to the growth of the Czechoslovak scene and the promotion of the esports ecosystem in general. While organising competitions and interacting with players and fans, the Events Department plays an important role in developing talent, increasing interest in esports, and strengthening the legitimacy and recognition of esports as a form of mainstream entertainment.

As the arbiters of memorable and innovative events, the Events Department plays a multifaceted and crucial role in the success of SINNERS eSports. Ranging from building brand awareness to stimulating community engagement, generating revenue, and contributing to the esports ecosystem growth, its relevance goes beyond event management, making it an integral part of the organization's overall strategy and impact on the esports industry.

2.3.3. Commitment of the Events Department

SINNERS eSports Events Department is committed to flawless execution in all aspects of its events, ensuring that:

- **Logistical Expertise:** From choosing event locations to planning travel, coordinating player accommodations and on-site facilities, SINNERS eSports demonstrates excellent logistical capabilities, ensuring smooth event operations.
- **Cutting Edge Technology:** Using state-of-the-art production and broadcast technology, the organization delivers professional-quality live streams and fully immersive experiences that rival traditional sports broadcasts within the Czech youth scene.
- **Player and Fan Engagement:** SINNERS eSports promotes meaningful player engagement by offering a welcoming, participant-centred environment. In addition, they prioritise fan engagement by creating interactive experiences that make fans feel an integral part of the event.
- **Real-time Adaptability:** By having sufficient and competent staff, the Events Department demonstrates the agility to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and unexpected challenges, ensuring minimal disruption and preserving the integrity of each event.

2.3.4. Impact of Gaming Events

Events in the gaming world have become a driving force that revolutionises the gaming industry landscape. From exciting eSports tournaments that attract spectators to major brands, these events bring enthusiasts together and have become catalysts for profound change and progress within the gaming community. From the internship carried out, these are the main impacts of the events organised by SINNERS:

- **Uniting Gaming Communities:** Gaming events act as epicentres for communities to network, gather and share their passion for the most diverse games. The power of these gatherings lies in their ability to transcend geographic barriers and foster a sense of camaraderie among like-minded individuals who may have previously only connected online. In this way, SINNERS seek to create events that foster an inclusive environment where participants can celebrate their shared love of games.
- **Fostering Innovation and Industry Growth:** Gaming events act as cradles of innovation, providing a platform for brands and companies, connected to gaming and beyond, to exhibit their latest creations and progress. Through these events, the stakeholders present, by getting real-time feedback and interactions, get a first-hand insight into industry trends, inspiring new ideas and improving existing concepts. Beyond the big brands, SINNERS provide opportunities for independent developers and start-ups to gain exposure and establish potential partnerships, contributing to a more diverse and competitive gaming ecosystem.
- **Building Brand Equity and Fan Loyalty:** When organising events, SINNERS are always looking to find brands to sponsor or host their events, allowing companies to

showcase their products and services to a captivated audience, reinforcing brand identity and values. These companies have the opportunity to engage with fans in interactive activities such as giveaways and meet-and-greet sessions, cultivating a sense of loyalty and strengthening the bond between the gamers and the brands they admire.

- **Fostering Social and Cultural Impact:** Gaming events extend their impact beyond the industry, contributing to social and cultural change. While it is not something that happens at every event, space is sometimes given for diverse voices and perspectives to be heard, fostering inclusion and diversity within the gaming community. In these situations, SINNERS present panels and discussions that address critical topics such as mental health, starting vital conversations that influence both the gaming community and society at large.
- **Environmental Considerations and Sustainability:** As the scale of gaming events continues to grow, organizations and event organisers are increasingly aware of their carbon footprint, adopting eco-friendly practices and seeking to reduce waste. With this sense of responsibility in mind, SINNERS also opt to organise hybrid and even fully online events, thus reducing the need for extensive travel and physical infrastructure, while maintaining a sense of community and engagement.

After all, the impact of gaming events goes far beyond their duration, creating a lasting impression on the gaming industry and the wider community by acting as unifying gatherings for people with shared passions. It is with this goal in mind that SINNERS run

their events, seeking to elevate gaming experiences and engage audiences in the Czech Republic and surrounding countries, key to shaping the trajectory of the future of the gaming industry in the region.

3. Professional experience

3.1. Introduction

In a dynamic eSports landscape dominated by online competition, it remains LAN tournaments and events that are most desired by fans. To make this happen and provide an unforgettable experience to everyone involved, it was necessary to plan and organise the event in the best possible way. This Counter-Strike event, carefully crafted and organised, embodied the essence of competitive eSports, showcasing the skill, teamwork, and fervour that have defined CS:GO tournaments over the years. The event was originally planned to be a Counter-Strike 2 tournament, a game that would replace the popular CS:GO. However, this was not possible as, at the time of the event, the eagerly awaited new game had not yet been released. As a result, the event in question celebrated the history of CS:GO and will be remembered as the last LAN event for this game on Czech soil. During the internship, the grand task and main focus fell on the meticulous organization of this event. Thus, this section aims to provide a detailed overview of the responsibilities I had as well as a panoramic view of the event's journey.

3.2. RETAKE Festival Overview

RETAKE Festival was a bring-your-own PC Counter-Strike LAN event, where people could play competitively and win prizes or just play for fun with their friends. This event happened from Friday 25th and ended Sunday 27th of August 2023 in the Home Credit Arena, Liberec, Czech Republic. Based on the concept of "retaking" victories and rounds, the event highlights the essence of Counter-Strike, where teams fight to regain control during battle, incorporating the thrill of retakes and comebacks - a true reflection of the spirit that drives this players' community. As well as celebrating eSports culture, the RETAKE Festival symbolises the resilience of the gamer community and the ability to come together again to celebrate a shared passion, reinforcing the vital role of events in reviving the collective spirit after a difficult period of the pandemic.

3.3. Objectives and Goals

RETAKE Festival has been carefully planned with several objectives and goals in mind, all of which are aimed at providing an exceptional experience for those involved. To this end, five main objectives were defined:

- **Celebration of the eSports Community:** The main goal of the event was to unite players, fans, and eSports enthusiasts from the Czech Republic, Poland, and Germany in an atmosphere of celebration and camaraderie. The aim was to create a social space where the community could share their passion for Counter-Strike and interact with other people who share similar interests.

- Immersive and memorable experience: It was also intended to provide an immersive experience that captured the competitive essence of Counter-Strike and the excitement of the matches, to ensure that all participants, whether players, fans, or sponsors, had a memorable experience. It was, therefore, one of the objectives to create an environment where participants could feel part of an authentic tournament, crucial for the success of the event.
- Successful number of participants: The event endeavoured to reach approximately 200 participants so that it would be possible to proceed as planned, both in terms of the tournament structure and the prize pool. Reaching this target not only reflected the interest and enthusiasm of the gaming community but also contributed to the vitality and energy of the event.
- Promoting Fair Competition: Fostering fair competition and sportsmanship among the participating players was also a priority. The event, therefore, strove to be characterised by integrity, mutual respect, and fair play, promoting an atmosphere where trust and collaboration were valued.
- Networking: In addition to the competition, the RETAKE Festival sought to offer networking opportunities and personal interactions between gamers, fans, influencers, and industry professionals. To this end, the goal was to create an environment conducive to forming long-term connections, sharing experiences, and learning among all those involved.

These objectives and goals, intrinsically connected, were designed to create a remarkable RETAKE Festival, where attendees would not only witness the competitive

passion of Counter-Strike but also be part of a celebration that goes beyond the gaming screen. Based on the literature, and according to Taylor (2018), revenue generation is a core objective of eSports events. However, in the case of the RETAKE Festival, it was not one of the priorities, as it was the first edition of the event and the associated costs were very high.

3.4. Target Audience

As mentioned in the literature in the study carried out by Newzoo (2020), more than 50 percent of eSports enthusiasts are tech-savvy 18 to 34-year-olds. The RETAKE Festival was designed to attract a diverse audience but with one major thing in common: a passion for Counter-Strike and competitive gaming. According to the same study, a shared love for video games is at the core of the eSports audience. As such, the event's appeal goes beyond borders, welcoming participants not only from the Czech Republic but also from neighbouring countries such as Poland and Germany. As per Nielsen (2019), having audiences from different countries presents unique opportunities for international sponsors and brands looking to expand their market reach. This intercultural celebration aims to unite players and fans, fostering a sense of community and shared passion. The target audience included:

- Czech Gamers: The event offered Czech players a platform to show off their skills, interact with fellow enthusiasts, and celebrate the local eSports scene.
- Polish and German Gamers: With an eye on inclusion and expansion, RETAKE Festival has reached out to Polish and German fans, inviting them to be part of the event and get involved in this Counter-Strike fest.

- eSports Enthusiasts: Whether amateur or professional, eSports fans found a haven at the RETAKE Festival, where they could witness exciting matches, interact with players and win various prizes.
- Technology and Gaming Entrepreneurs: The event also attracted technology and gaming companies, offering insights into the latest trends, innovations, and equipment shaping the eSports scene.

3.5. Pricing

Pricing in eSports events refers to the structure and strategy of ticket and merchandise pricing, as well as revenue generation through various pricing models, involving a careful balance between generating revenue and providing access to fans and spectators (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). At RETAKE there were three different types of tickets:

- Normal Ticket 1500 CZK: For people who didn't want to play the competitive tournament but would like to experience a LAN event and play for smaller prizes. This ticket included: RETAKE Drink Cup; Soft Drinks (unlimited); Free Parking; Sleeping space (shared); 3-Plug Power; Cable; LAN Cable; WiFi.
- Tournament Pass 2500 CZK: For people who want to play the competitive tournament and fight for the big prize pool. This ticket included: Tournament entry fee for the whole team; Special place to sit for the group (5).
- VIP Ticket 3000 CZK: For people who didn't want to play the competitive tournament but would like to experience a LAN event with more comfort and benefits, and play for smaller prizes. This ticket included: RETAKE Drink Cup; Soft

Drinks (unlimited); Free Parking (indoor); Sleeping space (shared); 3-Plug Power Cable; LAN Cable; WiFi; Gaming Chair; Food Pass; Beer Pass.

3.6. Prize Pool

Prize pools in eSports events refer to the monetary rewards that are awarded to the participating teams or players based on their performance in a tournament or competition, typically funded through various sources, including sponsorship deals, ticket sales, merchandise sales, and crowdfunding (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). In the case of the RETAKE Festival, the prize pool was split as follows:

- CS:GO Main Tournament: 60000 CZK to be divided within the top 4 teams (35000 CZK for the 1st place; 15000 CZK for the 2nd place; 5000 CZK for the 3rd and 4th places).
- 1vs1 CS:GO: SteelSeries and Fractal prizes (Fractal case + SteelSeries headset for the 1st place; SteelSeries mouse for the 2nd place; SteelSeries mousepad for the 3rd place).
- Wingman: SteelSeries and Kaufland prizes (2x SteelSeries headset + 1000 CZK Kaufland Card for the 1st place; 2x SteelSeries mouse for the 2nd place; 2x SteelSeries mousepad for the 3rd place).

3.7. Event Planning and Organization

As described in the literature by Lee and Schoenstedt (2011), behind every eSports event is a meticulously planned and flawlessly executed operation, with event planning and organization being the pillars on which eSports tournaments and competitions are built. RETAKE Festival's planning and organization were conducted in detail, encompassing a range of essential steps to ensure the event's success. This process started with identifying the objectives, followed by defining the vision for the event and the strategies to achieve it. The timetable covered various phases, such as:

- **Concept and definition:** In this stage, according to Lim (2019), organisers create comprehensive schedules, handle logistics, and establish clear objectives. The first thing to be done on 5 June was to define the concept, theme, budget, and objectives of the event, as well as the dates and venue. To this end, several trips were made to Liberec (the location of the event) to meet and discuss these topics with the management of the venue in question, in order to make it feasible.
- **Organising team:** Within the events team of four people, responsibilities were assigned and defined on 12 June. Tasks were then distributed among the remaining SINNERS employees as an organization, and external collaborators were hired to help out during the event.
- **Defining the structure:** As per James (2018), the choice of tournament format varies from Single-elimination, double-elimination, and round-robin, to Swiss formats, each bringing a unique competitive dimension. On 15 June, planning began on the main

activities, such as the tournament and its structure, prize pool, panels, and entertainment activities. All of this was planned according to the number of players and budget initially planned, and could be changed in the future if the expected numbers were not achieved.

- **Fundraising:** Attracting sponsors is key for financial stability, where drafting attractive sponsorship packages and building strong partnerships are critical (Smith & Johnson, 2021). So, on 21 June the identification of potential sponsors, partners, and sources of funding began, in order to guarantee the necessary resources. This was followed by contact with potential sponsors until the agreement was eventually finalised.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** Marketing around the event began on 6 July, with the creation of the website and social media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Discord). Once this task was completed, the marketing campaign began, using posts, stories and ads to promote the event on social media and reach as many players as possible.
- **Registration and Ticket Sales:** Registration for the event opened on 12 July, so that anyone who registered would receive information via email about everything that was being announced. Ticket sales began on 25 July, allowing participants to confirm their attendance. Both were done exclusively through the event's website.

- Logistics and preparation: Security, both online and on-site, is non-negotiable, as protecting players and fans from threats is a top priority (James, 2018). The logistics of the venue, including the layout of the areas (Figure 2), the technology and equipment needed, security, accommodation, and food, were planned with detail and attention. They started as soon as the date, location, and structure of the tournament were set, and continued until the end of the event, with the dismantling, packing, and delivery of all the equipment requested.
- Parallel activities: One week before the event, the entertainment activities to be held during the event were finalised in collaboration with the partners and sponsors. These activities involved game stands, giveaways, competitions, and interactive experiences, always with the aim of enhancing the participants' experience.
- Broadcasting and coverage: The success of eSports events largely depends on highquality production, where live streaming, casting, and content creation must be presented (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Engaging content keeps viewers enthralled. During the week of the event, 3 days before the opening of doors, the infrastructure was prepared for live broadcasts of the matches and activities, as well as for online coverage of the event.
- Staging of the event: On 24 August, the entire events department travelled to the venue to ensure that everything was operational by the time the doors opened. This took place the following day at 12 pm, closing on the 27th at 10 pm. The following day, all the material was dismantled and put away.

- Post-event evaluation: Post-event analysis is integral to growth, where organisers must evaluate the event's success, gather feedback, and use data-driven insights to refine future events (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Once the event was over, it was time to evaluate the results in order to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement to be taken into account in the future. To this end, feedback was collected from participants during and after the event via online questionnaires.

RETAKE Festival was the result of a multi-faceted collaboration, involving a dedicated organising team and dedicated partners who shared the vision of the event.

3.8. Tournament Structure

RETAKE Festival features a dynamic and competitive tournament structure designed to be as fair as possible and to give every team a second chance before being eliminated. The main tournament had four different groups, each containing four teams, labelled Group A, Group B, Group C, and Group D. The teams within each group would compete against one another in a best-of-1 Round-Robin format, ensuring that every team played against each other once. Instead of using a traditional points-based system, the round robin format employs a win-loss system, where a team earns a "1" for each victory and a "0" for each loss (ESL, 2021). According to the same ones, Round-Robin formats aim to showcase consistent performance over a series of matches. The results of the group-stage matches determine the seeding for the playoffs, meaning that teams' performance in the group stage would directly impact their placement in the knockout stage. Matches in both the group stage and playoffs

were designed to have a definitive winner. In the case of a match ending in a draw in regulation time, it would go to overtime until a winner was found. When advancing to the Playoffs, teams from Groups A and B and from Groups C and D would be mixed, in order to make the tournament fairer and more exciting, as we can see in more detail in the Playoff tree in the attachments (Figure 3). The 1st seed team, (the team that finishes first in each group's standings), secures a direct spot in the quarter-finals of the playoffs. Teams placing second in the group stage will get 2nd seed and will advance to the round of 16, where they will face the winner of the consolidation game between the 3rd and 4th seeds from groups A and B or C and D. The winner of this matchup progresses to the quarter-finals. Finally, teams placing third and fourth in groups A and B or C and D will get 3rd and 4th seeds and compete in a consolidation game. The winner of which will face the second seed from groups A and B or C and D in the round of 16. All the games would be played in a best-of-3 format, always using both standard Competition Settings and Rules and Regulations applied for a CS:GO tournament, according to ESL (2023). In addition to the main event, the big CS:GO tournament, there were also two small competitions in the same game for those who didn't sign up for the first one. These consisted of small elimination games, 1vs1 and 2vs2, with prizes provided by the event's sponsors.

3.9. Marketing and Promotion

According to the literature, marketing and promotion are integral components of CS:GO events. Through social media engagement, diverse content creation, strategic

sponsorship activations, community involvement, and innovative marketing campaigns, event organisers create memorable experiences for both fans and sponsors (Wilken et al.,2020). These strategies not only increase the visibility of the event but also contribute to the lasting appeal of eSports (Krattinger et al., 2020). The inaugural edition of the RETAKE Festival presented an exciting opportunity to showcase the event to a diverse audience of eSports enthusiasts. To ensure its success, a comprehensive marketing and promotion strategy was devised:

- **Social Media Campaigns:** The power of platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Discord was used to create a buzz among the gaming community, through engaging posts, countdowns, and teasing content.
- **Official Website:** A dedicated event website was created, offering detailed information, schedules, participating teams, and ticketing options, serving as a central hub for all event-related updates.
- **Teaser Videos:** Teaser videos were released, offering glimpses of the event's concept, competitive nature, and the excitement participants and viewers could expect.
- **Collaboration with eSports Communities:** Partnerships with online gaming communities, forums, and platforms helped spread the word among passionate gamers.
- **Email Campaigns:** Newsletters were sent to subscribers, providing exclusive insights, early access to information, and special offers.

- Online Advertisements: Targeted advertisements were run on gaming platforms, social media, and relevant websites to capture the attention of the gaming community.

A range of visually captivating marketing materials were designed to effectively communicate the essence of the RETAKE Festival:

- Event Posters: Eye-catching posters featured key event details, dates, venue, and a sneak peek of the participating players and influencers (Figure 4).
- Social Media Graphics: Engaging graphics optimised for various social media platforms, including banners, profile frames, and story templates.
- Countdown Content: A sense of excitement was created through countdown graphics and posts as the event drew nearer.
- Event Schedule Graphics: Visually appealing event schedules highlighted key matches and activities (Figure 5).

Engaging with Czech, Polish, and German influencers and eSports personalities proved a potent method to amplify the reach and impact of the RETAKE Festival:

- Content Collaborations: Partnerships with popular eSports streamers, casters, and influencers resulted in dedicated content about the event, including preview videos, discussions, and live streams.

- **Guest Appearances:** Well-known eSports personalities were invited to make appearances, participate in panel discussions, and provide insights about the industry.
- **Giveaways and Contests:** Collaborations with influencers hosted giveaways and contests related to the event, generating excitement and encouraging their followers to engage.
- **Promotion through Streams:** Influencers were encouraged to stream their gameplay and experiences during the event, allowing their audience to witness the action.

3.10. Sponsorship and Partnerships

In the dynamic landscape of eSports events, sponsorships and partnerships play a pivotal role in shaping the success and impact of these gatherings (Hoffman et al., 2019). According to the same authors, they furnish the financial means to produce high-quality tournaments while concurrently enhancing brand visibility and engagement within the eSports community. The event garnered robust support from a distinguished line-up of sponsors and partners, each bringing a unique essence to the event and contributing to its success:

- **SteelSeries:** One of the leading gaming peripheral brands, stepped onto the stage as the main product partner, rewarding participants with items from the brand.
- **Red Bull:** Their sponsorship involved the naming of one of the minor events, Red Bull Fick, having their logo placed on all its promotional materials (Figure 6).

- Coca-Cola: The American company was presented as an associate sponsor, providing participants with a place to relax in their branded lounge area.
- Svijany: The renowned brewery stepped in as the official drinks partner, having their logo adorned in all drink's stations and glasses.
- Kaufland: The retail chain played a key role as a retail partner, aligning convenience with the event's logistics.
- Fractal: Presented as a product partner, they gave players access to an exclusive exhibition area of their gaming cases and hardware solutions.
- North Jerky: The beef jerky brand also joined as a product partner, offering participants protein-packed snacks.

3.11. Event Logistics

As mentioned in the literature, behind the exciting CS:GO matches are the complexities of event logistics. From venue selection and technological infrastructure to security, broadcast production, and player amenities, logistics plays a key role in the execution of CS:GO tournaments. According to Pitts and Stotlar (2018), a well-executed logistics plan not only guarantees the success of the event but also improves the overall experience for players and fans. The complex logistics of the RETAKE Festival were meticulously planned to ensure a smooth and captivating experience for players, attendees, and the general public. The venue, the Home Credit Arena in Liberec, played a key role in shaping the dynamics of the festival:

- **Venue Overview:** The Home Credit Arena, situated in the heart of Liberec, provided an expansive setting for the festival's activities. With its modern facilities and capacity to accommodate a considerable number of players, the arena was the ideal setting for the RETAKE Festival.
- **Player Zones:** On the side of the arena, carefully designed zones provided the participating teams with a comfortable and focused environment. These zones were equipped with power cables and plug extensions and later with high-performance gaming PCs and monitors brought in by the players.
- **Display Areas:** Dedicated spaces were allocated for partner exhibitions, where sponsors such as SteelSeries, Fractal, and the others mentioned above presented their latest gaming equipment and products. These areas allowed attendees to interact with products and experience cutting-edge technology first-hand.

RETAKE Festival's reach extended beyond the arena, captivating audiences all over the Czech territory through strategic broadcasting and live streaming efforts:

- **Live Streaming Platforms:** The event was broadcast on Twitch, allowing eSports enthusiasts across the country to tune in and witness the action from the comfort of their homes.

- **Multiple Perspectives:** The broadcast team utilised multiple cameras and perspectives to capture the intensity of the matches and the reactions of the players. This dynamic approach provided viewers with an immersive and comprehensive experience.
- **Casting and Analysis:** A team of expert casters and analysts provided real-time commentary, insight, and analysis, enhancing viewers' understanding and enjoyment of the matches.

3.12. Audience Engagement

Audience engagement is at the heart of successful CS:GO events, where its success is measured not only by the skills of the players but also by the enthusiasm of the fans (Sarsa et al., 2017). RETAKE Festival attracted a significant audience, both in person and online, making it a notable success in terms of audience engagement:

- **Physical presence:** Around 100 players, representing various teams or playing individually, were present throughout the three days of the event. In addition, around 50 people, including staff from the organization team, brand representatives, and security, were present to ensure the smooth running of the festival.
- **Online audience:** The live broadcast of the event on the channels of four well-known influencers attracted many people. Over the three days, an average of 5,000 viewers tuned in, following the matches and activities remotely.

According to the literature, as per Kane (2019) engaging with fans on social media, integrating feedback, and regional customization ensure that the event resonates with a global

audience and creates a sense of community and excitement. To achieve these figures, the event excelled in promoting active and participatory audience engagement, both on-site and online:

- **Social Media Engagement:** A solid social media presence allowed viewers to get involved in discussions, share favourite moments, and interact directly with influencers and the event organisers.
- **Real-Time Commentary:** The live broadcast encouraged real-time commentaries, where viewers shared their opinions on the matches, asked the players questions, and expressed their support for their favourite teams.
- **Participation in Activities:** The online audience was encouraged to take part in polls, surveys, and competitions during the event, providing a sense of active involvement.
- **Immediate Feedback:** The influencers and organisers followed the viewers' feedback in real time, adjusting the experience based on the audience's preferences and comments.

4. Conclusions, limitations and further suggestions

The first edition of RETAKE Festival marked an exciting and memorable journey, not just an eSports event, but a vibrant celebration of the community and culture that surrounds the gaming world. The main mission of the event was fulfilled by providing a unique celebration for Counter-Strike players, fans, and enthusiasts on the Czechoslovak scene, even if it fell short of the initially idealised figures. The event brought the eSports

community together, strengthening bonds and creating memories among those involved, with many expressing a desire for a second edition.

My participation in the RETAKE Festival as an intern provided a wealth of experience and knowledge crucial to my professional development in the eSports industry. I had the opportunity to be part of the organisation of an eSports event, allowing me to gain an in-depth understanding of its dynamics, culture and community, as well as acquiring practical skills in event planning, coordination and execution. All of these skills and learnings are applicable and have prepared me for future exciting and challenging opportunities in the eSports industry, a sector where I intend to make a name for myself professionally.

4.1. Success Metrics and Evaluation

As pointed out in the literature by Lee and Kim, (2019), success in CS:GO events extends far beyond a team's win-loss record, as it encompasses a multitude of factors that collectively contribute to the growth and sustainability of eSports. The RETAKE Festival was evaluated on the basis of a series of metrics and objectives defined in advance, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of its success:

- **Celebration of the eSports Community:** The main aim of the RETAKE Festival was to celebrate the eSports community by making a difference in the Czech scene. This goal was successfully achieved, as the event brought together eSports players, fans, and enthusiasts in an engaging and exciting environment.
- **Immersive and Memorable Experience:** Creating an immersive and memorable experience was another key objective. The positive feedback and the expressed desire

for a second edition indicate that the RETAKE Festival successfully achieved this goal. Participants enjoyed the interactive activities, product exhibitions, and interactions with players and influencers, which contributed to an unforgettable experience.

- **Number of Participants Successful:** The target of reaching 200 participants was not fully achieved, as the event had 150 participants (100 of whom were players). This shortfall can be explained by difficulties in selling tickets and competition with other similar events, as explained above.

Success in CS:GO events is multifaceted, ranging from viewership metrics and sponsorship engagement to player performance and fan satisfaction (Kane, 2019). By meticulously evaluating the following aspects, event organisers can not only measure their success but also continually improve the quality and impact of eSports tournaments:

- **Attendance:** The attendance metric was a key indicator of success. The presence of approximately 100 players and 150 participants in total on-site demonstrates the eSports community's interest in the event.
- **Online Engagement:** Online engagement, measured by the average number of 5,000 viewers during the live broadcast on influencer channels, was another vital metric. This indicates that RETAKE Festival managed to attract a sizeable audience and engage them throughout the event.
- **Positive Feedback:** Positive feedback collected through satisfaction surveys, social media, and direct interactions with participants and spectators is a crucial input. The

desire for a second edition and complimentary comments about the experience indicate that the event was successful in meeting expectations and creating a positive impression on the gaming community.

4.2. Limitations

While RETAKE Festival was a resounding success, some limitations and challenges emerged during the course of its organization. The experience gained from navigating limitations provides valuable insights for future event planning and organization in the dynamic eSports landscape (Hee, 2019). The following limitations were encountered during the event planning and execution:

- **Organization during the summer and holiday period:** Scheduling the RETAKE Festival during the summer became complicated, resulting in delays in getting responses from potential partners and sponsors due to the holiday period of the people responsible for such decisions.
- **Server and Technology Management:** The main limitation faced during the event was related to issues with servers. There were occasional disruptions and technical hiccups that affected the smooth flow of the event, on the first day. These issues necessitated real-time troubleshooting and required the deployment of additional technical support staff to address them promptly. According to Nadeem and Saeed (2019), technical vulnerabilities in the eSports environment are an ongoing challenge, and robust cybersecurity measures are essential to prevent such disruptions in the future.

- **Banking Issues:** Ticket sales, a significant source of revenue for the event, encountered challenges due to banking issues. Some ticket transactions were delayed or declined due to unforeseen banking system complications. This led to temporary inconveniences for potential attendees and necessitated additional support to resolve the issues.
- **Managing Event Competition:** The eSports calendar is densely packed with various tournaments and events happening simultaneously. This posed a challenge as RETAKE festival had to compete for attendance, viewership and engagement with an expected similar event in Czech Republic.

4.3. Prospects and suggestions for the future

Establishing prospects in eSports events is extremely important for the success and growth of organizations in the industry (Carvalho & Vieira, 2020). Implementing these solutions and recommendations will help address the limitations faced during the event and ensure that future eSports events are better prepared, more inclusive, and capable of delivering even greater success (Schleifer et al., 2020). The RETAKE Festival provided a valuable learning opportunity for me and the entire organisation team, identifying areas for improvement and highlighting important lessons for future event planning and organization activities, such as:

- **Server and Technology Management:** The initial incident with server problems emphasised the importance of thorough technical preparation. In the future, it will be

crucial to carry out even more rigorous testing of IT infrastructure and systems to avoid similar disruptions.

- **Ticket Sales:** The difficulties in ticket sales indicate the need for more robust and personalised marketing and promotion strategies. It will therefore be important to identify new strategies to make tickets more attractive and competitive. In the future, the implementation of multiple payment gateways and contingency plans for banking-related disruptions will be vital to ensure seamless ticket sales.
- **International Audience Attraction:** The struggles in attracting Polish and German fans highlight the importance of a stronger international marketing strategy, including partnerships with influencers and the creation of more and better content aimed at these markets.
- **Managing Event Competition:** Unexpected competition from similar events highlighted the need for a more thorough market analysis and coordination with other event organisers to avoid date conflicts. Managing event competition required innovative strategies for attracting and retaining the audience's attention. Highlighting unique aspects, enhancing the overall viewer experience, and scheduling around major rival events were strategies employed to mitigate this limitation.

4.4. Proposed strategies and activities

According to Maden and Springer (2019) proposed strategies and activities aim to improve the overall experience of events, making them more engaging, inclusive and memorable for eSports enthusiasts. Taylor and Witkowski (2019), on the other hand,

highlight that the specific implementation of such strategies will depend on the scale, budget and objectives of each event. According to my experience during the internship, and taking into account the context and reality in which SINNERS are set, it would be interesting to implement the following:

- **Multi-Game Tournaments:** Host eSports tournaments featuring a variety of popular games such as Counter-Strike, League of Legends, Dota 2, or Overwatch. This diversity would cater to a broader audience and increase the overall excitement of the event.
- **eSports Workshops:** Organise educational workshops on various aspects of eSports, from game analysis to team management. These workshops can benefit aspiring players and future industry professionals.
- **eSports Career Fair:** Partner with educational institutions and industry experts to host an eSports career fair, in order to provide insights into career opportunities within the gaming industry.
- **Gaming Health Zones:** Create dedicated zones for promoting physical and mental well-being among gamers, offering advice, mental health resources, and opportunities for physical activity.
- **Eco-Friendly Practices:** Implement sustainable practices, such as recycling stations, eco-friendly merchandise, and reduced single-use plastics, to reduce the event's environmental footprint.

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Attachments

Attachment A

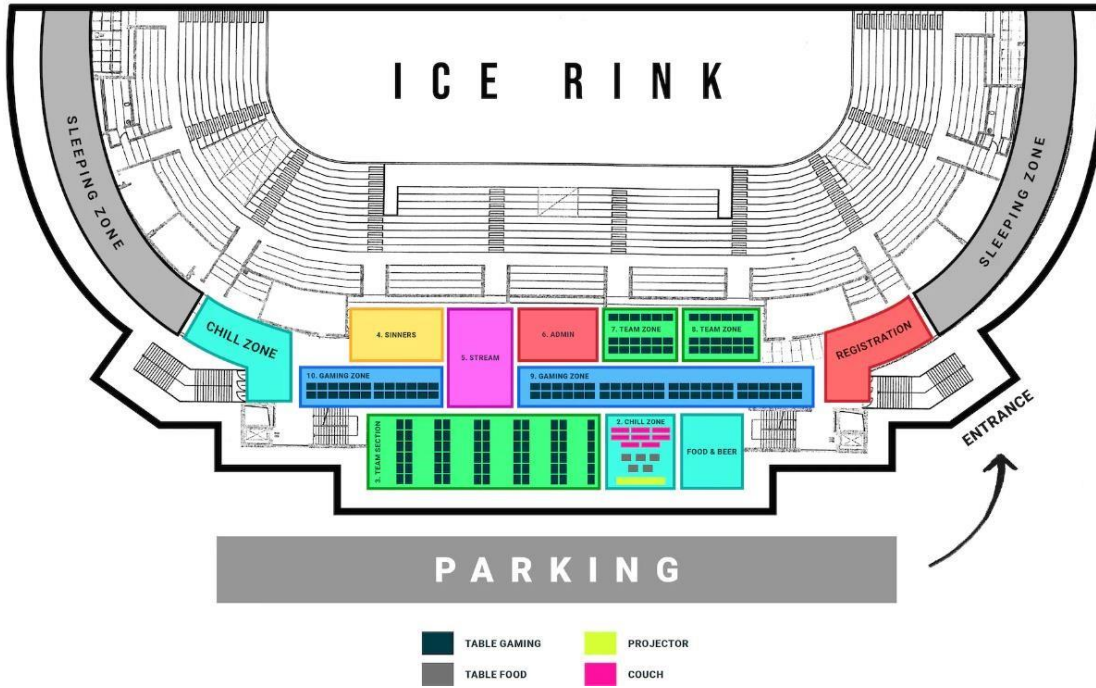


Figure 2. Venue layout
Source: SINNERS eSports

Attachment B

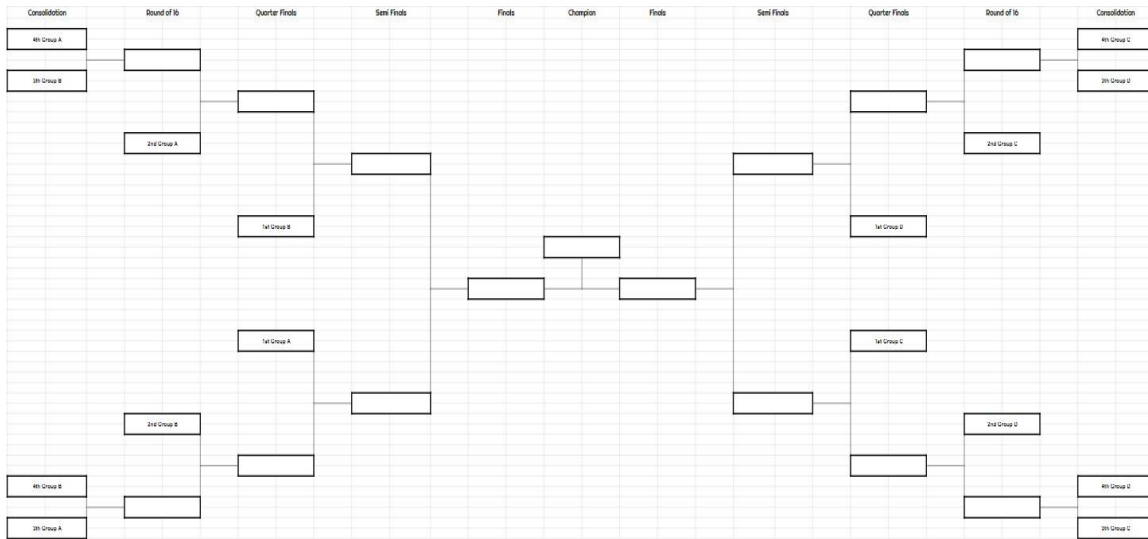


Figure 3. Tournament bracket

Source: Own authorship

Attachment C

COUNTER-STRIKE FESTIVAL
COME AND MEET THEM
 - €2.500 PRIZE POOL
 - BYOC FUN EVENT
 - 25. - 27. 8. 2023
 LIBEREC, HOME CREDIT ARENA

Figure 4. Influencers presented at the event

Source: SINNERS eSports



Attachment D

 TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE		
<p style="text-align: center;">FRIDAY</p> <p>12:00 - 18:00 CHECK IN AND SET UP</p> <p>18:00 - 20:00 GROUP STAGE - GAME 1</p> <p>20:00 - 22:00 GROUP STAGE - GAME 2</p> <p>22:00 - 00:00 GROUP STAGE - GAME 3</p> <p>00:00 SEEDING PLAY-OFF BRACKETS</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SATURDAY</p> <p>09:00 - 10:00 BREAKFAST</p> <p>11:00 - 15:00 CONSOLIDATION (3rd vs 4th) BO3</p> <p>15:30 - 19:30 ROUND OF 16 (2nd vs WINNER CONSOLIDATION) BO3</p> <p>20:00 - 23:30 QUARTER FINALS BO3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SUNDAY</p> <p>09:00 - 10:00 BREAKFAST</p> <p>11:00 - 15:00 SEMI FINALS - BO3</p> <p>15:30 - 19:30 GRAND FINALS</p>

Figure 5. Tournament schedule

Source: SINNERS eSports

Attachment E

RED BULL FLICK WARM UP - 2v2

WHEN: SUNDAY 12:00

FORMAT: SINGLE ELIMINATION

*CUSTOMS RED BULL MAPS

PRIZES

1. 5000 CZK	2. 3000 CZK	3. 2000 CZK
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Figure 6. Red Bull Flick

Source: SINNERS eSports