

**GUIDELINES FOR MAGIC: THE GATHERING TOURNAMENTS IN
FINLAND**



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ABSTRACT

The goal of this thesis was to write guidelines for hosting large Magic: the Gathering tournaments in Finland. Magic: the Gathering is the oldest and one of the most popular trading card games (TCG) in the world launched in 1993.

The theoretical part of the thesis consists of two parts: the theoretical framework and methodology and analysis. The former being the theory of events in general and the latter being the methodology which makes the guidelines for the Magic: the Gathering tournaments in Finland. The main research of the thesis was worked out as quantitative research, in which the main part of the research was a survey. The survey got a total of 105 respondents. Additionally, three Magic players with background in tournament organizing and/or judging were interviewed on how they would differentiate tournaments from competition and how they would improve existing tournaments in Finland.

The main emphasis of the thesis was on creating the guidelines for Magic: the Gathering and creating the optimal marketing mix for the tournaments.

Keywords Magic: the Gathering, event organizing, TCG

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli kirjoittaa ohjesääntö suurten Magic: the Gathering -turnausten järjestämiseen Suomessa. Magic: the Gathering on maailman vanhin sekä yksi suosituimmista keräilykorttipeleistä, joka julkaistiin vuonna 1993.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen osa koostuu kahdesta osasta: teoreettisesta viitekehyksestä sekä metodologiasta ja analyysistä. Ensimmäinen osa on tapahtumateoria yleisesti ja jälkimmäinen osa on metodologia, joka antaa ohjesäännön Magic: the Gathering -turnauksille Suomessa.

Tämän opinnäytetyön päätutkimus tehtiin kvantitatiivisena tutkimuksena, jossa pääpaino tutkimuksella oli kysely. Kyselyyn tuli yhteensä 105 vastausta. Lisäksi opinnäytetyöhön haastateltiin kolmea Magic: the Gathering -pelaajaa, joilla on taustaa turnausten järjestämisessä ja/tai tuomaroinnissa. Heitä haastateltiin siitä, miten he erottaisivat turnaukset kilpailusta ja miten he parantavaisivat nykyisiä turnauksia Suomessa.

Opinnäytetyön pääpaino oli Magic: the Gathering -turnausten ohjesäännön luomisessa sekä turnausten optimaalisen markkinointimixin luomisessa.

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Avainsanat Magic: the Gathering, tapahtumatuotanto, TCG

Sivut 35 sivua ja liitteitä 4 sivua

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Appendix 1 Questionnaire on Large Magic: the Gathering Tournaments in Finland

Appendix 2 Interview Questionnaire: How would you differentiate large Magic events from the (existing) competition?

1 Introduction

Magic: The Gathering (or just Magic or MTG) is a fantasy-themed trading card game in which two or more players build a deck of 60 or more cards and battle against each other. (MIT Technology Review, 2019) Magic was invented and designed by Dr. Richard Garfield between the years 1991 and 1993. (Magic, n.d.) The first ever Magic cards saw the light of day in August of 1993 published by Wizards of the Coast (nowadays a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc.) and the game has grown since then to have as many as over 35 million players worldwide. (Webb, 2018) The original card set of Magic: The Gathering known nowadays as 'Alpha' had only 295 unique cards. (Glew, 2016) Today the number of unique Magic cards is somewhere around 22,000. (Gatherer, n.d.) Since the launch of the game in 1993 all cards were printed in English but since then Magic expansion sets have been released in various languages for players to enjoy the game in their native languages including French (1994-), German (1994-), Italian (1994-), Spanish (1995-), Portuguese (1995-), Korean (1995-1998, 2011-), Japanese (1995-), Chinese (1995-) and most recently Russian (2005-). (Cardmarket, n.d.) As Magic: the Gathering is a social game to be enjoyed by two or more players, Magic tournaments are a chance for players to play against new opponents, hang out with friends and have fun while competing for prizes. Organized play has been part of the game since the very beginning. The tournaments may range anywhere between eight to hundreds or even thousands of players depending on the popularity and the size of the event. The largest Magic: The Gathering tournaments in Finland in the recent years have been gathering around 100 to 150 players. The biggest tournaments ever held in Finland were Grand Prix Helsinki in 2000 and Grand Prix Helsinki 2004 which gathered 367 and 455 players respectively from all around Europe, while in the 2010s a Magic: the Gathering Grand Prix got on average around 1390 players. (Wizards of the Coast, 2004)

2 Purpose and research objectives

2.1 Purpose

The biggest reason for the author to select this topic was that Magic: The Gathering has been a significant hobby of his since he was introduced to the game by a friend in early 2013. During the years of playing Magic: the Gathering and attending events the author has met lots of new people and attending tournaments has been a great way of spending time with the people he has got know through the mutual hobby. The author has attended both small and large tournaments here in Finland and travelled with friends abroad to both European and American Magic: The Gathering Grand Prixes. The smallest local events in Tampere region had been tournaments of eight and more players and the largest ones abroad have had over 3,500 players. In addition to just attending and playing in Magic tournaments the author has been organizing weekly tournaments for up to 20 people since 2018. He has also been part of the group that hosted the Finnish Legacy Nationals in both 2018 and in 2019 which were the unofficial Magic: The Gathering nationals for a constructed tournament format called Legacy. These events gathered 109 (in 2018) and 135 people (in 2019) to compete for fame and cash prizes.

The purpose of this thesis is to benefit Magic: The Gathering tournament organizers in Finland to enhance their event marketing as well as give suggestions to differentiate themselves from the competition. This thesis should also act as guidelines with everything needed to run a Magic: the Gathering tournament efficiently as well as help to plan the events themselves.



Figure 1. Finnish Legacy Nationals 2019 (Tr3 Gamers 2019).

2.2 Research objectives

The thesis has three research objectives. The first objective being to find ways how to attract more players to Magic: The Gathering tournaments, second one being finding the perfect marketing mix for the tournaments and the third is to offer guidelines for organizing a well-planned Magic: The Gathering tournament for a larger crowd.

2.3 Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to answer the following research questions:

1. 'What is the optimal marketing mix for large Magic: The Gathering Tournaments?'
2. 'How to attract more players to attend the tournaments?'
3. 'How to differentiate the tournaments from competitors?'

2.4 Research methods

A survey was composed to gather information from the Finnish Magic: the Gathering players to define the target audience (gender and age) and their preferences of different Magic: the Gathering formats. Also included in the questionnaire were questions about reasons for traveling to and attending Magic events.

In addition to the survey three long-time Magic: the Gathering players residing in Tampere with background in tournament organizing, judging, and playing at large events were interviewed.

2.5 Boundaries

The thesis will focus on solely Magic: The Gathering Tournaments and the marketing plan will focus on only to attract existing Magic players as competitive magic events (or large tournaments in general) require players to know exactly how their own and opponents' cards work rules-wise in the game, which is not an ideal environment for someone who is new to the game or hasn't played in any previous events.

3 Theoretical Framework

Events have been around us for an eternity and the original meaning of events or 'eventus' in Latin was big happenings out of the ordinary. (Damm, 2012, p. 6-7) The event industry and the number of events has grown enormously in the recent years, and it has been one of the fastest growing and economically lucrative industries out there. (Damm, 2012, p. 1) Events themselves can be categorized into three different basic groups: business events (conferences etc.), cultural events (exhibitions, festivals etc.) and sporting events (for example boxing nights, ice hockey matches). (Arcodia & Barker, 2003 p.3) According to Williams (2012, p. 76) events are put on to accomplish set objectives which may vary from building awareness for a new product in the market, celebrate an occasion to regional economic development. Honing these event objectives into reachable goals for managers usually require managing event characteristics. (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012, p. 76). Ferdinand

& Kitchin (2012, p.76-7) also argue that a framework of four main elements is an applicable solution for event management which include feasibility (desired level of performance, means of supply), viability (achieving financial goals, returning expected profit), desirability (event concepts must be desirable to internal and external stakeholders, differentiates the event from competitors and building up anticipation of unique experience for the potential event audience) and stakeholder expectations (planning and completing an is a learning process for both the managers of the event and the stakeholders).



Figure 2. Event Objectives (Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012, p.77)

3.1 Event process

Ferninand & Kitchin (2012 p.78) argue that event process can be divided into five phases which are:

- Phase 1 Initiating process phase; identify all potential ideas and decide which is the best one for achieving the event objectives.
- Phase 2 Planning phase; expounds the idea and determines required resources to deliver.
- Phase 3 Mobilizing; event setup is performed.
- Phase 4 Staging; the event is staged/performed.
- Phase 5 Closing; evaluation of the event process, learning from event activities.

3.2 Initiating process phase

The purpose of the initiating process phase is for the event organizers to prepare themselves for the event before the detailed planning phase begins. It is also the first phase as it will state why the event is needed in the first place (Ferninand & Kitchin, 2012, p-78-79) According to Dowson & Basset (2015, p.23-24) in the initiating phase the organizer should answer the 5Ws which are:

1. **Why** are you putting on the event? What is the purpose of the event? Why is the event need? What are its motives and objectives?
2. **Who** is coming to the event? Who are its target audience? What is the customer profile? How many attendees are you expecting?
3. **What** is happening at the event? What are the activities, the program, and the format of the event?
4. **When** is the event taking place? Date, time, etc.
5. **Where** is the event taking place? Location, venue, surroundings.

3.3 Planning phase

Planning phase is made of process, input, and output. (Chan, 2016) Its inputs are resources granted by stakeholders as well as the event description from the initiation phase. (Chan, 2016) One of the most important factors in the event planning phase is determining the budget. It helps to round up expenses and round down revenues to keep the budget in check and it's recommended to use Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet computation software when sketching the budget. (Huhtaniska, Tirronen, Turunen, Asikainen, Ahlavuo, Heinonen, 2019, p. 193) All events have seven necessary resources (expenses) which include the venue itself, structure, and technology for performance and/or speakers, needed permissions and licenses, appropriate program and content for the event idea, functional team, marketing that reaches the wanted target audience and finally administration. (Huhtaniska et al., 2019, p. 194) In addition to budget planning, event concepts and answering the 5Ws its important to manage the stakeholder relationships to make sure they are all helping and willing to work to make the event a successful one. Dowson & Basset (2015, p.42)

Risk analysis is also an extremely important factor in the planning phase and should be reconsidered each year even if the event stays the same as all events are unique in their audience and in their programs. (Huhtaniska et al., 2019, p. 234) There are different levels of risks and the more probable, harmful or the more significant consequences it has the more you should be prepared. (Huhtaniska et al., 2019, p. 234)

3.3.1 Marketing mix

Marketing mix consists of product, distribution, promotion, and pricing strategies to carry out exchanges to reach the target markets. (Išoraitė, 2016, p.1-2) Marketing mix is usually referred as the “4Ps” which are product (goods and services), price (monetary amount charged for the product), promotion (communication) and place (delivery). (University of Minnesota, 2015, p.16) It’s a conceptual framework which is used to identify and configure the offering to meet the needs of the consumers. (Goi, 2009, p.1) It is also argued that reasons for marketing mix being a powerful concept are that it makes marketing seem effortless to handle and it allows separation of marketing from the company’s other activities and entrusts the tasks of marketing to experts. (Goi, 2009, p.1)

Išoraitė (2016, p.3-4) describes product as physical product or service that the consumer is willing to pay money for.

Price is one of the most crucial elements in the marketing mix, price increases market share in addition to profits. Išoraitė (2016, p.6-7) It is also one of the most flexible elements of the marketing mix as it can be swift to adjust to changes in the environment. Išoraitė (2016, p.6-7)

Place is also called distribution which is the means and methods that the products and/or services reach the customers. (Išoraitė 2016, p.8-9) The distribution channels are an essential component of the service which includes the provider of the service, agents, and the same service user. (Išoraitė 2016, p.8-9)

Promotion is the last of 4Ps and it helps to increase the awareness of the consumers about the products and services, which will lead to higher sales, builds up brand loyalty, encourages purchase and will affect the purchase decision process. Išoraitė (2016, p.9)

3.3.2 Sponsors

As said by Huhtaniska et al. (2019, p. 213.) sponsorship is part of the marketing communications of events and to making it successful requires time and expertise. The goals for the sponsorship of sponsors might include increasing revenues, recognizability, product placement, new distribution channels, utilizing the image of the sponsored event in their own image, means of brand management and building a positive image. (Huhtaniska et al., 2019, p. 213.)

There are different types of sponsors. Main sponsors, which are usually interested in co-operation with the event, want to gain a lot from the co-operation. For example, they might want to get a say about the other brands or companies that the event staff are considering doing sponsorship with. (Huhtaniska et al., 2019, p. 213.) Other kinds of sponsorships include official partners (can be multiple, just like with main sponsors), co-branding (multiple brand names used as a single service or product), barter (product or service exchange), media partnership (compensations are offered as media space), product promotion (product placement and sales) and finally cross and joint co-operation between sponsors. (Huhtaniska et al., 2019, p. 213.)

3.4 Mobilizing phase

According to Chan (2016) in this phase the event plans are processed, and the plans serve as guide for the event team to check that the work they have done in preparation of the event is within the budget and the scope of the event. Throughout this process the team in charge of the event is required to communicate the progress they've made to the stakeholders. (Ferninand & Kitchin, 2012, p.87) In addition according to Ferninand & Kitchin (2012, p.87) the event team is required to evaluate their performance against the event plans and if any variance exists that could influence the outcome of the event the teams should be ready to plan a corrective act and event plans should be updated accordingly. A pre-evaluation report

could be done at the end of mobilizing phase that could provide useful data for event staging. (Ferninand & Kitchin, 2012, p.87).

3.5 Staging phase

If approval is granted by the stakeholders based upon the findings of the pre-evaluation form event activities are performed. (Ferninand & Kitchin, 2012, p.87-88)

3.6 Closing phase

During the event closing process, the event team reviews all the event documents to ascertain any lessons learned and once the review of the documents is completed, the event team should compile a report on the lessons learned, which can be used as guidebook in the future for event planning. (Ferninand & Kitchin, 2012, p.88) Also at this phase, the event team also ensures that all financial issues relating to the event are solved. (Ferninand & Kitchin, 2012, p.88)

Finally, the event is evaluated. Evaluation can tell if the event was successful if it reached the set goals. (West Economic Development Corporation, 2019) Evaluation of the event also helps to decide and find out if there are some needs to make tweaks to the event formula in future events.

4 Methodology and Analysis

4.1 Initiating process phase

4.1.1 Why?

As the initiating process starts with all events, one should identify the need to have the event in the first place. For gaming stores, a reason for hosting events is to promote the store and the hobby itself, bring people from all around Finland to play and do shopping there. As Magic players need products related to the hobby in the likes of deck boxes, card sleeves, dice, and other accessories to protect their Magic decks and cards and to play the

game the shops will have increased sales in those items during, right before and right after the event. In addition to these reasons the stores in the Wizards Play Network (WPN) will get more promotional materials to distribute to the players in Magic: the Gathering events and the stores will gain other benefits like more limited run products for the release than other shops depending on the amount players they get annually in their WPN sanctioned gaming events. The WPN started as the Duelists' Convocation in late 1993 and was later changed to Duelists' Convocation International (DCI). (Chalk, 2014) The DCI (nowadays WPN) was a membership organization which was designed to promote and endorse official Magic: The Gathering tournaments worldwide by providing members with official tournament structure and the tools for generating consistent tournament environment which was also fun and fair. (Carl, 2009) Hosting large event in-store will yield both the store and players. For independent tournament organizers reasons for hosting large tournaments might be for example to revive local Magic: the Gathering competitive scene and offer something that gaming stores can't offer. These can be anywhere between cash prizes, hosting a larger tournament than any shop could fit in-store or simply wanting to give something special to the players.

4.1.2 Who?

Who is coming to the event? What is the target audience? Players of Magic fall into two groups; the casual players and the tournament players. Their approach to the game is very different from each other. The casual players tend to play in their own playgroups with casual decks with very little interest in tuning their decks to have the best in-game performance and many casual players are not at all interested in investing large amounts of money into the hobby. Tournament players in other hand tend to optimize their Magic decks to be the best they can be to maximize their chances of winning and spend moderate to tons of money doing so.

Tournament Magic is still a male-dominated hobby in Finland, but there has been some number of female players as well in tournaments increasing numbers. According to the conducted survey 98% of the players in Finland are male, 1% female and 1% identify as other than male or female.

The launch of the computer game Magic: The Gathering Arena in 2018 have helped to bring Magic to the broader audiences and made new players also interested to try out the game on paper. While the game is meant for ages of 13 and up (Morris, 2018) the average Magic player is in their late 20s and early 30s (63,8% of the responders) and the second biggest group being people aged between 35-44 (27,6%). While smallest age group being tournament players of 45 and more years of age.

4.1.3 What?

What is happening at the event? What type of tournament is it? What format is played at the event? Magic: The Gathering tournaments are either constructed tournament meaning the players register a deck that they have built from cards they own prior to the tournament or Limited tournaments in which the decks are built from sealed Magic: The Gathering products at the very beginning of the event. On some occasions some tournaments may mix these two tournament types, but it's rather uncommon practice. In Limited tournaments the decks are registered after they have been built, but before the first round of the tournament. Deck registration means that the players submit a digital or a physical copy of a list of cards to the judges which contains the names of the cards in their decks (using the card names in English) and the amount of each card in their deck. This is to prevent cheating at tournaments, if a player has tampered or altered their decks during the tournament, they can be 'deck checked' in which the judges compare the content of the players' decks to the list they have submitted. If the deck is not matching the submitted list the judges usually give out a single game loss to the players with the deck list error(s).

The Magic: the Gathering tournaments usually involve two players facing against each other each round of the tournament. Swiss pairing system is used in Magic: the Gathering tournaments. This means that not every player will face each other, but their opponent in each of the rounds have roughly the same amount of tournament points (three points for winning, one point for draw and zero for losing). The rounds are played usually with a 50-minute timer and best-of-three games method is to determine the winner of the match. The number of swiss rounds played in a Magic: the Gathering tournament is determined by number of players attending the event (Duke, 2018):

- 5-8 Players = 3 Rounds
- 9-16 Players = 4 Rounds
- 17-32 Players = 5 Rounds
- 33- 64 Players = 6 Rounds
- 65-128 Players = 7 Rounds
- 129-212 Players = 8 Rounds
- 213- 385 Players = 9 Rounds

In addition to the swiss rounds the eight best players of the swiss round face each other in the top9 which is three more rounds of single elimination Magic to determine the winner of the tournament. (Magic Judge, n.d.) In the top8 play-offs the 1st of Swiss faces the 8th of Swiss, 2nd of Swiss faces 7th of Swiss and so on. The quarterfinals and the semifinals usually have a longer time limit (usually 90 minutes compared while the Swiss rounds have 50 minutes round time), and the finals have no time limit at all. This is to make sure that the matches can be finished to determine the winner as a draw is not an option for the outcome of the match. If the timer runs out in the quarterfinals or semifinals the regular 5 additional turns are played and after that the player with the highest life total wins the game. (Magic Judge, n.d.)

After choosing the type of tournament one is hosting (limited or constructed) one should choose which format the tournament is going to be.

4.1.4 Limited Formats

There are three WPN sanctioned limited formats: Booster Draft, Rochester Draft and Sealed Deck. (Wizards of the Coast, 2012). In limited formats the minimum deck size for players is 40 instead of the regular 60 cards. Usually, large limited tournaments mix the two most common limited formats; Sealed Deck for the swiss rounds and Booster Draft for play-offs.

Rochester Draft hasn't been used in any major tournaments since Pro Tour Nagoya in 2005. (Magic, 2005)

In a Sealed Deck tournament each player opens six MTG booster packs (each containing 15 randomized cards of different rarities) and build a deck out of them adding any number of basic lands. (Coles, 2020)

Booster Draft has ideally eight players each with three booster packs of Magic cards (each containing the 15 random cards). All the players open the packs at the same time, pick a card and then passing the remaining cards to the player on their left until the packs are gone, next pack drafted the same way, but passing to the right and the final one is drafted exactly like the first one. (Coles, 2020)

Rochester Draft works a bit like Booster Draft, but instead of all players opening their booster packs at the same time, only one booster pack is opened, and its contents are held visible, and each player picks card from it when it is their turn to do so. (Wizards of the Coast, 2012)

The limited formats are played in the same manner from year to another, but what changes is the expansion sets of Magic: the Gathering products used in the tournaments. Most commonly the newest booster packs from a Standard legal expansion set are used in competitive Limited tournaments. Each set offers completely different archetypes for Limited decks and different game mechanics are used in different sets and some sets even include totally new game mechanics and abilities.

4.1.5 Constructed Formats

Currently there are eleven WPN sanctioned constructed formats. These include Standard, Modern, Commander, Legacy, Vintage, Brawl Team Unified Constructed, Block (Constructed), Two Headed Giant, Pauper and Pioneer. (Magic, n.d.)

The specific constructed format determines which cards are legal to be in the players' decks. Each constructed format also has its own ban list consisting of cards deemed too powerful to be allowed to be played in the format. The players' decks must contain at least 60 cards and

each card can be only included up to 4 times (not including basic lands). Players have an additional sideboard of up to 15 cards from which they may tune their decks in the second and third game of their best two-out-of-three matches in the tournament.

The most popular Constructed Formats in Finland have generally been Standard, Modern, and Legacy. Community-created nostalgic “old-school formats” have also seen rise in popularity in the past few years.

The Standard format allows only cards printed in the past two years to be played with. Every year in September the oldest legal card sets rotate out of the format to make room for the newer sets. (Terence, 2021) Standard is the most accessible constructed format as the card pool is narrow and the format can be played on both paper and online via Magic: the Gathering Arena. (Terence, 2021)

Modern in other hand is non-rotating format which means that the newer sets won't push the older ones out of the format. (Duke, 2015) The Modern format was introduced in 2011 and allows nearly all cards printed since core set 8th Edition (2003) to be played with. (LaPille, 2011) Larger pool of cards means that some of the older cards are a lot more expensive and sought than the ones used in Standard as the supply is more limited and demand has been growing each year as Modern gets more popular. (Coles, 2021) It can also be argued that there is a higher learning curve compared to Standard as there are thousands of cards that can be played and lots of decks to play with and play against.

The Legacy format as the name suggests, is the oldest of these most popular constructed formats in Finland. Legacy is an eternal format, which means that every single set from the vast history of Magic: the Gathering is legal in the format. (Duke, 2015) The format defining feature is the massive card pool of over 22,000 from the very early days of Magic up until nowadays sets. (Duke, 2015) Of all these mentioned sanctioned formats Legacy is the most expensive as many sought after cards from the entirety of Magic's history are allowed to be played in Legacy. Wizards of the Coast has a certain reprint policy from which they have not strayed from since the introduction of reserved list. The reserved list is a list of cards that they will never reprint again. (Magic, 2016) Many of those cards a highly sought-after collectors' items which prices have been increasing steadily in the 2000s and more rapidly in

the 2010s and 2020s. Just like Pokémon cards, old video games and stocks, there has been a high demand for the rare and sought-after Magic: the Gathering cards during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Ausfresser, 2021)

Many of the reserved list cards are powerful Magic cards that are allowed to be played as a full playset of 4 cards in Legacy which makes the competitive Legacy decks to cost anywhere between couple of hundreds to couple of thousands of euros. (MTG Goldfish, 2021)

4.1.6 When?

When is the event? One of the first things the tournament organizers needs before they can start promoting the event is setting up the date for the tournament. This can sometimes be tricky as normally there are lots of other Magic: the Gathering events taking place during the weekends. And as with all other events in the world the earlier the tournament organizer sets up the date the better. Especially during Spring and Autumn there are a lot of major MTG tournaments happening all over Finland. The tournament organizer can be a step ahead of the competition by having the date set up early on as soon as possible. During summers there are rarely any big Magic tournaments or events in Finland as there are lots of other events, like summer theater, festivals etc. taking place. It's not recommended to have large events during summer as it might be a struggle to get enough people there. Saturdays have been usually the most popular date for large events as it is the best day of the weekend for players to travel to other cities as the events usually take up the whole day and most people do not have to get up early for work on Sunday morning. Saturday should also be the best day considering your volunteers and judges who usually have jobs of their own, so it is usually not preferred to have them judge a tournament until late Sunday evening and then travel back home and be early at the office or must study or attend lectures Monday morning.

4.1.7 Where?

Where is the event taking place?

When planning the event, one should consider how many people are expected and reserve a venue of adequate size. It usually helps the tournament logistics if the venue has already

enough seating for the desired number of players plus tables. In addition, a large screen or a tv, or a video projector to show the timer for the rounds. And as with all events the earlier the date has been set prior to the event the more likely more players will show up and/or preregister for event as they have enough time to consider deck options, make travel plans and/or take days off from work accordingly to attend the event.

4.2 Planning phase

4.2.1 Staff

In Magic tournaments judges oversee running the event. They help players to find things for example pairings, tournament registration, deck list forms and bathrooms. The judges will also answer rules questions players might have and help with rules disputes the players may have during games. (Duke, 2015) Official Magic judges have a judge level ranging from level 1 to 3. For example, a level 1 judge can run small store-level events, a level 2 judge can be the head judge at a small to medium sized event and finally a level 3 judge can run many premier events and they lead judge programs and other projects. (Judge Academy, 2020)

Nearly all major tournaments in Finland are WPN sanctioned events. As only gaming stores can get their events sanctioned nowadays it is beneficial for both the tournament organizer (if not a store) to collaborate with a local gaming store on their event(s) to get the sanctioning rights for the event(s). This will most likely also benefit the store as they will get additional publicity and the store might get additional promotional cards for distribution in their own events as the WPN can see that they have had large number of players in their events.

The number of judges needed at an event depends on the expected number of players:

- 71 – 105 expected players: Three Level 2 or higher judges
- 105+ expected players: A Level 2 or higher Head Judge, with one judge per 35 players or fraction thereof (Head Judge included).
- 140+ expected players: as above, but a Level 3 Head Judge is recommended

also, a dedicated scorekeeper is recommended if the player limit exceeds 150 players. (Magic Judge, n.d.) In the author's experience if there are approximately one hundred players at an event a dedicated scorekeeper should be used as they will be a staff member always present at the same location so he will be able to answer players' questions about the event during and between rounds. It is also worth noting that the scorekeeper is not needed to have a valid Magic Judge status but knowing how the official pairing software works is crucial. In case of the event having side events (which are smaller tournaments that start after the main event has been going for couple of rounds, so players who might not have done so well in the tournament may drop from the main event and play side event tournaments) there should be additional judges to judge and oversee the events. Other possible staff might include commentators of the live coverage

4.2.2 (Pre)registration and tournament fees

Since there are usually limited player slots for each tournament, some sort of preregistration should be used. Either a simple preregistration form on a local gaming store's website or on an online forum helps players to reserve their own slot in the tournament. Sadly, this will often mean that out of those preregistered players some will not still show up at the tournament. This could be easily averted by requiring players to pay their tournament fee prior to the tournament by bank transfer or by some other means. Prepaid tournament fees are also a must if the tournament organizer is renting the venue for the tournament as it will guarantee the tournament organizer to be able to pay for the venue. Getting the payments prior to the tournament day also helps the tournament to start at the agreed time as there is no need for all the people playing in the event to line up at the cash registry which will take a lot of excess time. Even if the payment transaction takes only 30 seconds, when it gets multiplied by the number of players its nothing but lost time from the tournament.

The tournament fees can vary heavily depending on the size and type of the tournament. Constructed tournament fees usually range from €5 to €60 depending on if one is attending a local gaming store's Friday Night Magic event or a Grand Prix main event which will gather hundreds or thousands of players competing for cash prizes in tens of thousands of dollars. Limited tournaments are usually a little bit more expensive as the tournament fee will include the sealed Magic: The Gatherings booster packs (each containing 15 cards) from

which players will build their decks from at the start of the tournament. The amount of booster packs needed depends on the type of the limited tournament. In booster drafts only three booster packs are needed while in sealed you will need six booster packs.

4.2.3 Budget

Tournament expenses are usually by the tournament entry fees of players. The expenses usually include the venue rent (if any), judge and staff fees, lunch for staff, tournament prizes and miscellaneous items (e.g., permanent markets, printer paper, trash bags etc.). As Magic: the Gathering is a niche it's common to budget no money for marketing events as it can be done for free in the right channels. Most common prizes in Finland are usually store credit/gift cards or Magic products. Some tournaments offer cash prizes. Depending on the size of the tournament prizes are awarded top 4 to 16 players.

Large constructed tournaments in Finland usually have tournament entry fees ranging from €20 to €30. Limited tournament run between €25 to €60 depending on the price, type and amount of the products needed in the event to build players' decks.

From 2019 onwards in Finland all the prizes of valued €100 or more needs to be informed to the tax administration. In addition, if a person gets prizes from competition worth of €100 or more within a calendar year those prizes need to be informed to the tax administration. (Verohallinto, 2020) In addition all prizes worth of over €100 need to be reported to the income registry (Verohallinto, 2020) Since the tournament organizer needs to report the prizes worth more than €100 to the income registry with the personal information of the people receiving these prizes, the data must be handled in accordance with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The easiest way to work with the GDPR regulation is to have either a sponsor or a gaming store with a GDPR compliance software to store the personal data to report the needed information to the income registry.

Fees paid to the judges should also be reported to the income registry as they are usually in the range of €100 to €150 paid by cash or by products. The head judge's fee is usually a little bit more as they have more responsibility with the event.

4.2.4 Marketing mix

In Magic: the Gathering tournaments the product is the tournament itself and it should be tailored to attract the wanted audience which are the fans of tournaments and or competitive Magic: the Gathering. To make the product even more attractive additional activities during and after the tournament could be added to attract even players that wouldn't come to the main tournament. For example, some casual or beginner-friendly side event tournaments launching after the main event can be way to attract more players from a wider audience to come to play at the tournament venue.

Price of the tournament (tournament/event fee) should be tailored with the budget to match the amount of money needed to pay for all the expenses of the tournament and to have the budgeted amount of money to be distributed as prizes for the top contenders. Also bearing in mind that the threshold for most players seems to be a €30-40 tournament fee.

Place in which the event is hosted is one of the most important elements as it dictates how many attendees can play at the tournament, is it easily reached by public transports or by cars. Choosing a venue with little to no logistics is also recommended as it saves a lot of time and money if the tournament organizers doesn't need to rent and/or transport tables, chairs, or other furniture to the tournament off-site.

Promotion should be targeted to the target audience which are Magic players who enjoy competitive tournament play. Advertising can be done by advertising through tournament sponsors' social media feeds, creating a Facebook event visible for everyone, posting about the event in both local and international MTG discussion forums and by word-to-mouth by the Finnish the MTG community.

4.2.5 Sponsors

In Magic: the Gathering most commonly sponsors are either accessory manufacturers or local businesses that are somehow related to the gaming community. Usually, the tournament sponsors are sponsoring the tournaments as product promotion sponsors, and they give out products as additional tournament prizes or even participation prizes. These products might include deck boxes (Magic card storage), playmats (like large computer

mouse pads which lots of Magic: the Gathering players use as a surface for their games) instead of money to the event. This is a great way for the sponsors to promote new products and a great way of introducing new customers to their products.

If the tournament is not run by a gaming store at a different venue, then a gaming store is usually chosen as the main sponsor as the tournament is impossible to be run as an official sanctioned Magic: the Gathering tournament without the sanctioning rights of a WPN store. In these circumstances the deal has been that the gaming store gets the promotion of main sponsor for the sanctioning rights. The main sponsors are also often given a sales stand in the main event area.

4.2.6 Tournament timetable

Each round of limited and constructed Magic has usually the recommended 50 minutes time for each of the rounds for players to play their best two out of three games to determine the winner of each match. (Magic Judge, n.d.) The number of rounds is dependable of the number of players in the event, for tournaments of 65 to 128 players seven rounds of swiss are played and if they number of players are between 129 and 226 eight rounds of swiss are played. (Magic Judge, n.d.) In case a match is still in progress when the time for the round is up, additional five turns in the game are played before determining the result of the match. (Magic Judge, n.d.) This needs to be acknowledged when making a sketch of the tournament timetable. In addition, it takes time to print out and post the pairings for each round so it would be best to allocate 60-65 minutes for each round in the timetable and it is recommended to start the tournament as early as possible for it to end on time. For example, a tournament of 8 rounds of swiss with 50-minute rounds plus the top eight single-elimination with 90-minute round timer could last between 11 to 13 hours depending on how long the final rounds take up time. A little break should also be in place between the swiss and the quarterfinals to give the remaining players and the judges some time to take a break due to lengthy days.

4.2.7 Marketing and live coverage

Magic: The Gathering is a niche, and this should be considered when planning the advertisements for tournaments. This means that it isn't very profitable to have billboard, radio nor TV commercials of your tournaments. The audience can be reached better by marketing the events on local gaming stores' websites or their social media feeds. Another effective way of reaching the Finnish Magic crowd is putting up a Facebook event and asking for people to invite all their friends who play the game. This kind of grapevine will catch the intended crowd with very little effort and without costing any money. In addition, traditional discussion forums can be utilized to have a banner or a pinned thread about the tournament on their website to catch the eyes of the people visiting the site.

Another great way of getting free publicity for the tournaments and gaming stores is to have a live coverage of the event with a feature match from each round of the tournament streamed online with commentators, studio discussions and interviews with players between rounds. Free streaming services like Twitch or Hitbox could be used to stream the live coverage of the event. This kind of live streaming can help to attract a wider audience to the tournaments and allow viewers at home to watch quality content from the game they love. In addition, these services allow viewers to watch the stream after the live feed had ended as video-on-demand (VOD). Live streaming might also interest some sponsors to sponsor the events as they can get lots of publicity by having their logo displayed during the long live stream.

4.2.8 Risk analysis

As with all events there are risks involved with organizing Magic tournaments. The most common risks are usually not very harmful or hazardous but might delay the event timetable by a lot. These small risks usually are issues with the tournament pairings software in which mandatory updates might sometimes pop up only minutes before the event should start or there are some other software or hardware errors with the equipment needed to run the tournament smoothly in time (e.g., faulty printer which is needed to post the pairings for each round). Other slightly more inconvenient risks are associated with last minute

cancellations (e.g., someone calls in sick) from the staff which in case the workload of the staff present is increased as they need to do the missing person's work as well.

Economical risks running tournaments are usually quite low as most events are run at a gaming store where the venue won't cost the event organizer any extra money, but if one is renting out the venue the biggest risk will be that not enough players show up at the tournament despite preregistration which mean that as the tournament revenues decrease from the expected the larger the expenses are percentage wise in the budget. Less tournament fees means less revenue which means that there will be less money spent in the prize pool in the tournament.

In this current day and age of pestilences environmental risks can be a large factor with event management as there might be rapid changes to gathering restrictions by local authorities which means that events might need to be outright cancelled at a short notice or downsized which both can be a major headache for event organizers and for players who have made travel arrangements, and some might have taken time off from work to get to attend the event.

4.3 Mobilizing phase

The event staff should start doing their task in preparation of the event during the mobilizing phase. If any problem should arise or there any changes to the event plans the plans should be updated accordingly.

Young (2015) states that the scorekeeping hardware should be tested days before the event, not on the morning of the event. Young (2015) also says that the scorekeeping station is good to have set up at least a day early, a Friday Night Magic tournament using the scorekeeping stations setup day prior to the event is a great way of testing out that everything is working properly.

In this stage the gaming tables should be numbered in logical sequence from row to row starting from 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on to help the judges bring the result slips for each table each

round with ease. (Young, 2015) Result slips are used to gather results of each match. The match result is typed into the slip in addition to the signatures of both players. Other information included in the slip are the table number and the number of the round. It is also important to remember that there always is a crowd around table 1 as people will be spectating the top table so it is important to have enough space around the said table for people to get around. (Young, 2015) Another thing to remember is as the tournament progresses players will drop from the tournament resulting in a less tables needed for players in the final rounds of the tournament.

If the tournament is a limited tournament a land station is needed to be set up as players will need to get their hands on basic land cards. According to Young (2015) it is best to have a judge at the land station to give out the basic land cards for players as they usually always make a mess of the land station if given free access to it.

4.4 Staging phase

The tournament is executed according to the event plan. The scorekeeper will manage the tournament software, print out pairings and submit the match results for each round while the head judge and judges make the mandatory deck checks at the start of each round, check the submitted deck lists, post pairings for players at the start of each round and tournament standings in the final rounds and at the end of tournament. They will also answer rules disputes and questions as they rise. Judges will also collect match slips from players at the end of round if the time limit for the round has been reached.

Young (2015) argues that the tournament pairings should be posted in at least two different locations within the tournament venue. The pairings and tournament standings should be posted on an eye level or higher for players to see them properly and not to block the view of the standings and/or pairings from other players. (Young, 2015).

According to Young (2015) if the preparations are correctly done one can run the tournament with 20 minutes of admin time between rounds which means that they will be

submitting the match results from the match slips and double-checking all the results that there aren't any errors.

4.5 Closing phase

During the closing phase the event team should review the event and take notes on lessons learned from it. In addition, a debriefing meeting should be held with the tournament staff at the end of the event to discuss on what worked on this event and discuss what to improve upon in future events. The tournament staff should also make sure that the financial issues have been resolved and taxation information gathered from the players they are needed from to pay prize money and/or inform the tax officials of product prizes won by the players if they exceed the taxable amount of over €100.

5 Results and Recommendations

5.1 Marketing mix for Magic tournaments

From the conducted survey an optimal Marketing Mix can be extracted as the respondents answered on the questions about which formats are they willing to play at large events (product), the price they are willing to pay for events (price) and about the communication of upcoming events (promotion). Only element of McCarthy's 4Ps not inserted into the survey was place, because the biggest concentration of tournament players in Finland is in the Helsinki region, Turku, and Tampere and that is where the major events have been able to launch with major success while tournaments in Central and Eastern Finland haven't gotten that many participants in the past mainly because there aren't that many Magic players in those regions and people don't want to travel there for tournaments.

5.1.1 Product

The product is the tournaments themselves. This includes design of the tournaments, the format played and the prize payout (and the prizes themselves).

The format played at the tournaments dictates greatly who will show up. Out the 105 respondents of the survey the most popular format was Modern. 69,3% respondents said that they would like to play in Modern tournaments. This was the most unsurprising as the number of Modern players has been increasing each year globally just like the amount of new players. There have also been new products designed for the Modern players which might be another reason behind the interest in the format.

According to the survey the second most popular format to play in large events for players would be Legacy at 67,7% respondents. This was somewhat unexpected, but easily explicable as there have always been a strong Legacy-community in Finland and even though that some cards gotten high in price players still hold on to their beloved cards. As the format has been around since 2004 there are some nostalgias attached to the decks and cards.

Surprisingly there seems to be a high interest for Limited tournaments with 43,9% of respondents willing to play Limited at large events. Most surprising was the popularity of Limited surpassed that of Standard, but also that event though Limited is a popular format only 43,9% of respondents wanted it.

The fourth most popular choice for a tournament format was the player community created and endorsed (unsanctioned by the WPN) singleton format Highlander(/Duel Commander) by 23,8% of respondents. In 'highlander' formats, players can have only a single copy of each card in their deck and instead of the regular 60-card decks in other formats, the decks must contain exactly 100 cards. The popularity of these more casual formats wasn't that surprising as there is a strong Highlander community in Finland with the Highlander Champs taking place every year in Helsinki.

The fifth most popular format by respondents was surprising. Pauper got the vote of 18,2% respondents. In Pauper the only allowed cards common rarity Magic cards. The commons as the name suggest are the most common and usually the most low-powered and cheap cards available in the game. The format is cheap to delve into and offers one of the widest card pools of Magic formats as every common card (apart from a separate banned list) printed since 1993 is allowed to be played in the format.

Pioneer, which is the youngest of the WPN sanctioned formats got the votes of 16,2% respondents. The format was launched in late 2019 and allows cards from the set Return to Ravnica (2012) onwards to be used. (Rasmussen, 2019) The author thinks the format will gain a rise in popularity once paper Magic tournaments come back to life after the pandemic as the COVID-19 pandemic affected the launch of the format gravely by cancelling all major events in 2020.

14,3% of the respondents answered that they would be interested in playing Old School formats at large events. These formats are not sanctioned by the WPN and are community driven with lots of variants including formats like '93/'94 Old School, Middle-School, Premodern and Classic Magic. As the name suggests these nostalgic formats usually allow cards from the early years of Magic: the Gathering to be played with and the goal of the formats is usually embracing the old Magic nostalgia instead of playing the best deck available.

Only 12,4% of the respondents answered that they would play the previously moderately popular Standard at larger events. One of the biggest reasons behind this drop in popularity can perhaps be risen popularity of Magic: the Gathering Arena for PC/Mac and mobile devices in which people can play Magic online. Magic: the Gathering Arena combined with the COVID-19 pandemic which halted all paper tournaments has also discouraged players to collect and update their Standard decks which has led the format to be played currently online only. Other reasons for the decline in popularity might include uninteresting metagame and constant banned list updates.

If the goal of the tournament organizer is to attract the most amount of players possible for their event, they should consider having either a Modern, Legacy or Limited tournament. But if the goal is to attract new players, then the tournament should be either Pauper, Pioneer or Standard as those formats are easier for newer players to get into, while still being interesting enough for veteran players.

The product aspect of the event also includes the prize payout. Participants will be interested in will the top8, top16 or 32 get prizes and will the prizes be in store credit, products, cash or in any combination of these.

According to a level 1 Magic Judge and long-time Magic player Anttu Kaipainen, 27, (interview 22 September 2021) cash prizes certainly does attract competitive players, but he feels that there should be a bit more to the prizes than that. Not that the winner should get €1,000, a new car and a computer, but that there should be some randomly awarded product/accessory prizes, so that there'd be a reason to stick to the tournament site for a longer time, even if one does not end up making it to the top8 of the tournament.

Ville Kaukoranta, 30, (interview 27 September 2021) carries on that actual currency is easier to understand and evaluate as a reward. Second, a potential participant can see it as a chance to recoup their costs regarding the tournament trip, especially if they are travelling from further away (200+ km). Third, if the organizing party can take care of any bureaucratic requirements (e.g., reporting the income for tax purposes), then the participant may see this as a sign of trustworthiness and as an extended service. Last: cash prizes have been an exception to the rule in Finnish MTG-tournaments, and this could be regarded as a clear way of differentiating from the rest of the tournaments. If cash prizes would continue to increase, then not answering to this trend can be, on the contrary, negative differentiation.

5.1.2 Price

The price of the product is the tournament entry fee. This should be optimized to be affordable for most players, be enough for the tournament organizer to pay all expenses and strike up a profit margin for the tournament organizer.

Out of the 105 people answering the thesis questionnaire 17,1% are ready to pay over €60 in tournament fees, 27,6% are ready to pay up to €50, while 14,3% of people are willing to pay up to €40, 20% are willing to pay up to €30, 14,3% are willing to pay up to €20 while the smallest groups were the people willing to pay up to €60 (1,9%) and people willing to pay up to €10 (4,8%).

This means that roughly adding these numbers up 80,9% of the players are willing to pay up to €30 for a tournament which has been the “industry standard” or so to speak in Finland for the past years. For 60,9% of the players would be okay with tournament fees of up to €40, and 46,6% would be okay with tournament fees of up to 50€ and only 17,1% of the players would be okay with tournament fees of more than €60. To get the most players to join the tournaments the €30 tournament fee would be advised if it will be enough to cover all the fees and prizes. Raising the tournament fee above that could mean fewer players or at least more dissatisfied tournament attendees as the tournament fee could break the bank on their part.

5.1.3 Place

For the marketing mix the venue and the place of the tournament is crucial to making a successful event with as many participants as possible. Generally, tournaments in Helsinki, Tampere and Turku have been getting the most participants as there are solid concentrations of players in all the cities. The large amounts of participants can also be explained by the ease of travel to these cities by public transportation and there are lots of choices for accommodations if the travelling players wish to stay through the weekend at the city of the tournament. According to Ville Kaukoranta (interview 27 September 2021) space, ventilation and light are the key elements that should be considered with the choice of a venue. If these cannot be reasonably arranged to cater for a tournament of N participants (+staff), then the tournament should be scaled down.

Tuomas Myllykoski, 32, (interview 22 September 2021) feels that most of the improvements [in Finnish tournaments] could be done on the venues. Tournament organizers should take care to have enough space at the venue for players. Sometimes tables are too crowded, and the quality of air also suffers from too many players in a too small space. Sometimes the venues have too low lighting, and sometimes the tables are a bit too close to each other, but otherwise they are quite fine. In the summertime tournament areas tend to get way too hot (and body odor-stinky), but I think that's an unavoidable problem.

Anttu Kaipainen (interview 22 September 2021) also shares the feeling that he would love to have bigger venues in general, just to have more breathing room. He also feels that game

stores are usually just too cramped. If the event is held in a restaurant, usually they have poor lightning for games. Bigger venues that have good lights are hard to come by, but if it was possible, he would like to have those.

5.1.4 Promotion

As Magic: the Gathering is a niche and tournament Magic is a partition of that niche the promotion of the events should be done accordingly to reach as wide audience as possible within the Finnish Magic community. According to the conducted survey 84,5% of the respondents hears about the tournaments from their playgroup and/or friends. The second biggest promotion channel for the respondents is Discord at 63,8% of the respondents. Discord is a chat app which supports video, voice, and text chat to get in touch with other people. (Hornshaw, 2021) It is a community platform which is built in forum-style communities that are semipublic. (Hornshaw, 2021) Most servers are gaming-related, but there are Discord servers created for various topics and hobbies for people to discuss and voice-chat about. (Hornshaw, 2021) The ease of use and the easiness of connecting with other people interested in the same hobbies, games etc. must be the reason Magic players hear and/or read about new upcoming events through discord. Social media platforms came in third in the survey at 56,2% of respondents in getting news about upcoming tournaments and events. Only 37,1% and 13,3% of respondents gets the news of upcoming event from traditional online forums and from the staff at brick-and-mortar stores, respectively.

One of the biggest reasons for the decline of the traditional online forums has been in the last decade the risen popularity of the likes of Facebook and Twitter where everyone can share their opinions and advertisers can get opportunities for making money. (Tait, 2017)

Relying on the respondents of the survey the Magic tournaments should be promoted through local Finnish Discord servers related to Magic: the Gathering and on Facebook groups dedicated to the game to reach the biggest audience of possible. Promoting the events through Discord and social media will also have the grapevine effect that players will tell other of the event and more people will find about it.

Live streaming the tournament through the likes of Twitch or YouTube is also important part of promoting the event as this might attract players who didn't attend the tournament to want to play at these events in the future.

Ville Kaukoranta (interview 27 September 2021) feels there is some variation that comes to tournament event marketing in Finland. Prior to covid-19, events often launched at full seats (i.e., no vacant slots left) with somewhat minimal marketing efforts, but exceptions to this were not uncommon. He believes that event marketing could be generally improved by increasing the frequency of reminders prior to the event (social media posts, "hype-messages"). Furthermore, these posts could include a continuous narrative that reinforces the players as not only customers, but as a part of a tournament scene and community. This way, the event could be seen as something more than just "one pastime among others" and opting out of the tournament on the same day becomes less lucrative.

While Tuomas Myllykoski (interview 22 September 2021) goes on that the largest organizers such as Poromagia, Oh My Game and Sensei's Divining Shop do a pretty good job with marketing, but they also have the benefit of a loyal and active customer base. This leads to their tournaments being almost sold out without much effort. Finnish Magic players have usually been hungry for competitive tournaments, and as there are not that many opportunities to play, they often jump at the chance to enroll and play. He sees this trend coming back after Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. The conclusion is that these big players should do fine with their social media and other online presence. Myllykoski also states that smaller event organizers such as Fantasiapelit and Puolenkuun Pelit are not as visible, and often rely on the local tournament scene to spread the word of their tournaments and to acquire players. It also seems that these Local Game Shops (LGSs) tend to leave the responsibility of organizing, judging, and running the tournaments to the players. If no players active in this sense are to be found i.e., no-one can handle the responsibility of running a tournament, the tournaments won't launch and the local player scene starts to fall off, which in turn reduces product sales. These LGSs would do well to hire a dedicated Magic player to their staff, who could then run the events and take the "Friday Night Magic" shifts. (Myllykoski, interview 22 September 2021).

Live coverage is marketing the game as well as bringing a chance for the players to be recognized. More and more people are pushing to the content creation market and showing up on stream is one way to get recognized. "Follow me on my social at..." etc. (Kaukoranta, interview 27 September 2021)

Producing live coverage already tells that the organizer feels like they're doing something so interesting that others want to watch it, even if they can't come and see it / participate in it live. Also, if one's friend tells that they're participating in a tournament that has live coverage, that makes one more likely to watch and perhaps participate in the future - especially if one can spot their friend on coverage! (Kaipainen, interview 22 September 2021)

5.2 Other ways of differentiating the tournaments from competition and attracting more players

87,6% of respondents in the survey answered that their reasons for playing in and traveling to play at Magic tournaments is to hang out with friends. In addition to these 51,4,% of respondents answered to play against new opponents and 34,3% answered to make new friends as their reasons to playing at Magic tournaments.

As the conducted survey suggests the format(s) played at the tournaments affects a lot on how many people and who are interested in playing at the events. The other factor is the cost of the entry fee.

5.2.1 Niche formats as way of differentiation

Out of the three interviewee two out of three agreed that the niche Magic formats might attract some players who might not otherwise show up to competitive tournaments. Ville Kaukoranta (interview 27 September 2021) thinks that most of the niche formats are not very well catered for in Finland and having a noteworthy side event of such a format could easily attract players that would not enroll for the so called mainstream main events. He believes that the niche format should include some form of coverage for it to attract some of the wanted attention. Anttu Kaipainen (interview 22 September 2021) continues that of

course, one can differentiate by offering something that isn't supplied elsewhere. The way to gain something from it is marketing and planning the event. For example, arranging a one-day Premodern-event might not attract that many players, but having it be two-day with another day being Modern [main event] should gain more players on both events than by just having one of them! While Tuomas Myllykoski (interview 22 September 2021) thinks that these formats don't have the staying power or the player base to support long term competitive play. And he sees them mostly as fads or nostalgia driven ways to spend excessive amounts of money.

Implementing a niche format and a popular format as two-day double tournament could be the key to offering something that the other tournament organizers aren't doing now and gaining some additional players for the popular format on Sunday while getting some additional interested players on Sunday.

5.2.2 Improvements to learn from existing tournaments

Anttu Kaipainen (interview 22 September 2021) says that usually, the events themselves are handled well; the judges (who usually run the actual events) in Finland are exceptionally good compared to common judges in rest of Europe. What is usually lacking is the shopkeepers, or the TO's (tournament organizer's), experience in handling a tournament. Usually, they prepare too little time to arrange tables, table numbers, event registrations etc., and let the judges handle everything after the tournament has started.

Ville Kaukoranta (interview 27 September 2021) feels that especially sticking to schedules is something that does not generally work in Finland: it can be considered a success if the initial announcements are given within 15 minutes of the pre-stated schedule. More could be done on educating the participants regarding when is it that they are expected to arrive on-site. This in turn could be done with increased communication between the event judges and organizers. He also feels that judging in Finnish events is, however, of high quality. Judges are well available, competent in rules questions as well as tournament regulations.

6 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to create guidelines for large Magic: the Gathering tournaments in Finland and to answer the research questions which were 'What is the optimal marketing mix for large Magic: The Gathering Tournaments?', 'How to attract more players to attend the tournaments?' and 'How to differentiate the tournaments from competitors?'

To create the guidelines both existing articles, official guides, and prior knowledge of the author on organizing tournaments were used.

For the optimal marketing mix of Magic tournaments, a survey was conducted to gather information from players of their age, sex, preferred Magic tournament formats, how much are they willing to pay for events and their reasons behind travelling to and attending the events. From the optimal marketing mix, the survey and the players interviewed for this thesis it was possible to answer the other two research questions in length.

To attract more players to play at Magic tournaments all the boxes in the marketing mix (price, product, placement, and promotion) should be in order, most importantly the product which is the event itself. And if the product is not interesting the event will fail.

6.1 Guidelines for Magic tournaments

6.1.1 Initiating process phase

Try to answer questions:

- Why? Identifying the need for hosting an event
- Who? Identifying the target audience
- What? Deciding what is happening at the event (deciding format, side events, the size of the event, etc.)
- When? Choosing the date is important as the more in advance the date can be set up the easier it is for players to arrange time to be there
- Where? Once the size of the event is decided a venue of adequate size should be chosen for the event

6.1.2 Planning phase

- Judges: approximately one judge per 35 expected players and additional judge if the event is reaching more than 70 players, additional scorekeeper is recommended after the number of players exceeds three digits
- Budget and the tournament entry fee should be calculated at this point
- according to the conducted survey tournaments fees up to €20 are okay with 95% of players while every ten euros added to the tournament fee decreasing amount of players willing to pay the amount
- Marketing mix should be built at this point (4Ps, 7Ps, 4 Cs, etc.)
- Sponsors and sponsorship deals should be done at this point in event planning
- Tournament timetable and live coverage should be planned at this stage
- Risk analysis should be conducted

6.1.3 Mobilizing phase

- Event staff should do everything possible in preparation of the event
- Scorekeeping hardware should be tested days prior to the event and if possible, run a smaller event using the same hardware prior to the event
- Gaming tables should be numbered at this stage
- In case the tournament is a limited tournament a land station for players to use should be placed in visible place with enough room for players to get their lands

6.1.4 Staging phase

- At this stage the tournament is executed according to the event plan
- Scorekeeper will manage the tournament software while judges judge and run the event and other staff does their tasks (e.g., live coverage)

6.1.5 Closing phase

- Event team should review the event and take notes on lessons learned
- A debriefing meeting should be had with the event staff to discuss which areas of the event worked and which didn't and which to improve upon in the future
- Financial issues are also resolved at this point including prize payout

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire on Large Magic: the Gathering Tournaments in Finland

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

What is your age?

- Less than 18
- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45+

How much money are you willing to pay for a tournament (excluding prize of products used in Limited tournaments) with large prize pool of cash/MTG singles (e.g., prize pool of €2,000 and upwards)?

- Up to €10
- Up to €20
- Up to €30
- Up to €40
- Up to €50
- Up to €60
- More than €60

From where do you usually notice/hear from upcoming Magic tournaments?

- From friends/playgroup
- Social Media
- Discord (MTGSuomi, Poromagia, MTG Tampere etc.)
- Traditional online forums
- From the Staff at the brick-and-mortar stores
- Other

Which tournament formats of Magic are you interested in playing at larger events?

- Modern
- Legacy
- Standard
- Pioneer
- Limited (Draft/Sealed)
- Old School Formats (Premodern, '93/'94 Old School)
- Highlander/Duel Commander
- Pauper
- Other

Reasons for playing in and traveling to play in Magic the Gathering tournaments?

- Competitive atmosphere
- Playing against new opponents
- Large prize pool
- Making new friends
- Trading/buying/selling Magic: the Gathering singles and/or product
- Hang out with friends

Appendix 2: Interview Questionnaire: How would you differentiate large Magic events from the (existing) competition?

1. Do you think that tournament organizers in Finland market their events enough? What could be improved?
2. a) Do you feel that tournaments in Finland are professionally handled from start to finish? For example, tournament organizer sticks to the timetable, event starts and ends at the appointed time, staff is professional etc.

b) What could be improved?
3. a) Do you think that live coverage of an event (on Twitch, YouTube, Hitbox etc.) attracts more players for future events?

b) Why is that?
4. How do you feel about the usual venues used in large tournaments in Finland? What would you change?
5. a) Could tournament organizers attract more players having cash prizes at the event instead of Magic product, accessories and/or store credit?

b) Why is that?
6. a) Could niche MTG formats (for example Old School format like Premodern) used as way of differentiating from the competition?

b) Why is that?