

# Strategic Business Models and Competitive Performance of Leading Counter-Strike 2 Esports Organizations:

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## A Multi-Case Analysis of G2, Natus Vincere, Team Liquid, and FaZe Clan

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### Abstract

This research paper explores how four premier Counter-Strike 2 (CS2) esports organizations—**G2 Esports**, **Natus Vincere (Na'Vi)**, **Team Liquid**, and **FaZe Clan**—structure and manage their financial models, sponsor partnerships, social media presence, and overarching business strategies. Drawing on information from 2022 through early 2025, the study examines the correlation between these strategic elements and each organization's competitive performance and growth trajectories. Additionally, it identifies key opportunities and challenges that the esports industry, and these top-tier teams in particular, are likely to face through 2024 and 2025. The findings reveal a robust reliance on sponsorship and publisher revenues, a strategic pivot toward global brand consolidation and social media engagement, and an expanding revenue emphasis on in-game economies such as stickers. While each organization has demonstrated strong regional or international success, inconsistent performance in certain esports titles underscores the complexity of managing multi-title portfolios. The transition from CS:GO to CS2 is viewed broadly as an opportunity for growth, yet also poses adaptation challenges for rosters. Projected industry trajectories indicate continued growth, marked by increased institutional investment, brand partnerships, and a potential consolidation of esports business models.

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### 1. Introduction

Over the past decade, esports has transitioned from a niche subculture into a global phenomenon, attracting diverse stakeholders—from multinational sponsors and media companies to traditional sports franchises and institutional investors. Counter-Strike, specifically, has played a pivotal role in this expansion. The transition from **Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO)** to **Counter-Strike 2**

**(CS2)** in 2023–2024 reinvigorated the franchise, offering new in-game monetization mechanisms (such as updated sticker systems), and catalyzing increased viewership and sponsorship interest.

This paper focuses on four leading CS2 organizations—**G2 Esports**, **Natus Vincere (Na’Vi)**, **Team Liquid**, and **FaZe Clan**—examining:

1. **Financial models** and revenue streams.
2. **Sponsor partnerships** and their strategic importance.
3. **Social media presence** and engagement strategies.
4. **Overarching business strategies**, including branding, marketing, communication, and stakeholder engagement.
5. **Correlation** between these elements and competitive performance from 2022 through early 2025.
6. **Industry outlook** through 2024 and 2025, highlighting projected directions, opportunities, and challenges.

By synthesizing financial and performance data, this paper offers insights into how esports organizations balance on-stage success with off-stage business sustainability, positioning themselves for long-term growth in a rapidly evolving market.

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## 2. Methodology and Data Sources

This research is grounded in a **multi-case analysis** approach. Data was drawn from organizational announcements, publicly available financial summaries, sponsor partnership releases, social media metrics, and tournament performance records. Though specific proprietary financial documents and confidential sponsor agreements are not publicly accessible in full, partial revenue figures, valuation estimates, and partnership details enable a rich comparative perspective. While the paper does not rely on traditional primary interviews, it synthesizes secondary materials consistent with typical esports-industry reporting, investor relations documents, and official team statements.

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## 3. Financial Models and Revenue Streams

### 3.1 Overview of Diverse Revenue Structures

**Leading CS2 esports organizations** typically rely on multiple revenue pillars to maintain financial stability and foster competitive excellence:

1. **Sponsorships:** Often the largest revenue driver, accounting for approximately 60% of total organizational income in some cases. Partnerships increasingly come from non-gambling brands (e.g., clothing, consumer technology, financial services) due to regulatory complexities surrounding gambling sponsorships in some regions.
2. **Game Publisher Payments:** Typically 30% or more of total revenue, especially for organizations with direct partnerships or revenue-sharing agreements with game publishers.
3. **Prize Pool Winnings:** Although iconic, prize money often contributes a smaller proportion of total revenue than sponsorship and publisher payments, especially for top-tier teams.
4. **In-Game Merchandise and Stickers:** Sticker sales during Majors can exceed prize pool earnings. For instance, Team Liquid's sticker earnings at the Paris Major (2023) were estimated to surpass **USD 2 million**, dwarfing their 2023 prize pool total (around **USD 218,666**).
5. **Consumer Products and Merchandise:** Apparel, team-branded peripherals, and other consumer goods typically make up around 10% of revenue for certain teams.
6. **Content Monetization:** Ad revenue and subscriptions from streaming platforms (Twitch, YouTube) provide additional, albeit smaller, income streams.
7. **Esports Leagues and Franchise Revenues:** Stable income derived from league participation (e.g., BLAST Premier, ESL Pro League).

### 3.2 Case-by-Case Financial Snapshots

#### G2 Esports

- **Revenue and Investments:** By 2023, G2 reported strong revenue, notably enhanced by successful brand partnerships.
- **Diverse Portfolio:** G2 invests across multiple esports titles—League of Legends, CS:GO/CS2, Rainbow Six Siege—helping balance fluctuations in performance from one game ecosystem to another.
- **Focus on Sustainability:** Evidence from 2022 and 2023 suggests G2 hones its resources on consistent staff salaries, practice facilities, and scaling infrastructure (e.g., content houses, training centers).

## Natus Vincere (Na'Vi)

- **Stable Growth:** Has historically relied on a balanced mix of sponsorships, in-game item revenue (particularly from the CS2 ecosystem), and consistent high finishes at Major tournaments.
- **Market Expansion:** In 2024, Na'Vi expanded into **PUBG Esports' Global Partner Team Program**, likely securing guaranteed revenue from publisher partnerships.
- **Strong Prize Pool Earnings:** Set a record for CS:GO prize money in 2021 (USD 4.28 million) and continued to reap large purses from major CS2 tournaments in 2024 (e.g., **USD 500,000** each for PGL Major Copenhagen and BLAST Premier: World Final).

## Team Liquid

- **Projected Financials (2022–2024):**
- 2022 revenue: **€27 million**, near breakeven EBITDA (–€670,000).
- 2023 revenue projected over **€30 million**, but with an expected net loss of **€2 million** due to investments.
- 2024: Aggressive global expansion (especially in the US and China) and entry into new titles (Call of Duty, Dota2) with a projected net loss of **€3.7 million**.
- **Sponsor Reliance:** Sponsorship and publisher revenue accounted for ~90% of total income. Longstanding partnerships with tech (Alienware, HyperX) and financial services (IMC, Visa) underscore its sponsor-focused model.

## FaZe Clan

- **Merger with GameSquare (2024):**
  - The combined entity reported **USD 138 million** in 2022 annual revenue with a 26.3% gross margin.
  - FaZe Clan is now a wholly-owned subsidiary under GameSquare, trading on NASDAQ under the ticker **GAME**.
  - The founders returned to leadership positions, with Richard “FaZe Banks” Bengtson appointed CEO of FaZe Clan.
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## 4. Sponsor Partnerships and Branding

### 4.1 Sector Diversification

All four organizations maintain broad sponsor portfolios, featuring apparel, gaming peripherals, electronics, automotive, cryptocurrency/blockchain, and other consumer-facing brands. **Na'Vi**, for example, lists **GG.BET** (esports betting), **PUMA** (clothing), **Logitech G** (peripherals), and several others. **Team Liquid** partners with **Honda**, **Coinbase**, **SAP**, **Visa**, and more. This diversification is critical for resilience against potential sponsor volatility in any single sector.

### 4.2 Evolving Sponsor Preferences

A trend away from gambling sponsorships—prevalent in earlier esports eras—has partially emerged, reflecting regulations in certain game ecosystems (especially for younger audiences). Nonetheless, some teams (e.g., Na'Vi) continue to maintain betting partnerships where permissible.

### 4.3 Brand Collaborations and Activations

Esports organizations work with sponsors to produce branded content, co-branded merchandise, unique digital activations (e.g., custom in-game items or stickers), and live event experiences. Brand synergy is key: for instance, **Team Liquid Honda** in League of Legends integrates automotive branding across jerseys, broadcast segments, and social content.

### 4.4 Social Responsibility and Community Partnerships

Na'Vi's partnership with **Happy Paw**, a charitable foundation for homeless animals, highlights how teams increasingly blend corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts into sponsor portfolios. Aligning with philanthropic causes can bolster brand image and broaden sponsor appeal.

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## 5. Social Media Presence and Communication Strategies

### 5.1 Platform Utilization

Esports organizations leverage multiple social platforms—Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube—to engage with fans:

- **Twitter:** Real-time updates, direct fan interaction.
- **Instagram:** Visual storytelling, behind-the-scenes player content, sponsor product integration.

- **TikTok:** Rapidly growing channel for gaming content, short-form comedic or highlight videos.
- **YouTube:** Long-form content, VODs, documentaries, player interviews.

## 5.2 Engagement Metrics and Observed Trends

- **G2 Esports** had ~1.3 to 1.4 million Instagram followers in 2023, with an engagement rate around **0.55%**, below the average 2.05% for similarly sized accounts.
- **Na'Vi** had 6.09 million total social followers as of February 2023 (third-highest among IEM Katowice participants), with particularly strong YouTube and Instagram footprints.
- **Team Liquid's** TikTok account (@teamliquid) showed 209.7K followers and 3 million likes, although 2023 view metrics remain undisclosed.
- **FaZe Clan** was historically known for its massive social footprint across YouTube and Twitter; as of 2022, FaZe boasted nearly 15 million total followers across major platforms.

## 5.3 Influencer Collaborations and Content Strategy

All four organizations partner with influencers (professional players, streamers, and celebrities) to enrich content. For example:

- **FaZe Clan** historically partnered with mainstream celebrities (musicians, athletes) to expand beyond gaming audiences.
- **Team Liquid** invests in content houses and high-production materials (e.g., documentaries).

These tactics aim to foster fan loyalty, strengthen sponsor relationships (via integrated promotions), and showcase players' personalities.

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# 6. Overarching Business Strategies: Branding, Marketing, and Stakeholder Engagement

## 6.1 Branding and Communication

A recurring theme is **brand consolidation**, ensuring that the organization's logo, colors, and values remain consistent across game titles. This consistency helps each entity compete globally for fan attention:

- **G2 Esports** leverages its "Samurai" branding and comedic tone in marketing.
- **Na'Vi** emphasizes its storied Counter-Strike heritage, marketing "Born to Win" across all channels.

- **Team Liquid** unifies its brand under the iconic horse logo and invests heavily in co-branded jerseys.
- **FaZe Clan** markets “FaZe Up” as a lifestyle brand, appealing to youth culture beyond esports.

## 6.2 Marketing Partnerships and Media Collaborations

Digital media companies frequently partner with esports organizations for content production, merchandise lines, and “shoulder content” around tournaments (e.g., docuseries, behind-the-scenes footage). Partnerships with **Shikenso Analytics** (Team Liquid) and other analytics firms demonstrate the increasing reliance on data-driven strategies, optimizing sponsor ROI and social media impact.

## 6.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder groups include:

- **Fans and Community:** Engaged via social media, live events, and fan-club memberships.
- **Sponsors/Partners:** Require transparent reporting on brand exposure and ROI.
- **Players and Staff:** Represent the core product on-stage; performance, well-being, and contract stability are priorities.
- **Investors/Shareholders:** Often demand profitability metrics and strategic clarity, particularly as teams look to global expansion.

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# 7. Correlation with Competitive Performance (2022–Early 2025)

## 7.1 G2 Esports

- **League of Legends:** Dominant regionally (2022 LEC Spring Split, 2023 LEC Winter/Season Finals) but inconsistent internationally (early group-stage exits at Worlds 2022, 2023).
- **CS:GO/CS2:** Spectacular start in 2023, winning **IEM Katowice** and **IEM Cologne**.
- **Rainbow Six Siege:** First two-time Six Invitational champion (2023).
- **Analysis:** Strong brand and robust sponsor base appear correlated with multi-title success. Notably, G2 invests heavily in star rosters, supported by stable finances and successful marketing.

## 7.2 Natus Vincere (Na'Vi)

- **Counter-Strike:** Consistent top-tier performance, including major 2024 titles (IEM Rio, PGL Major Copenhagen). Historically set a prize money record in 2021.

- **Expansion:** Added teams in Rocket League, Valorant, and more. Valorant performance lags behind Counter-Strike success.
- **Viewership:** Most-watched CS2 team in 2024 (64.85 million hours).
- **Analysis:** Long-term brand equity in CS fosters sponsor confidence and high viewership. This synergy supports expansions into new titles, though success in new games is variable.

### 7.3 Team Liquid

- **CS2:** 2024 performance inconsistent; difficulties in map pools (Nuke, Dust2) and internal role conflicts. Low pistol-round success.
- **League of Legends:** Persistent trust issues reported by certain players in 2024, potentially pointing to organizational or leadership challenges.
- **Financials:** Rapidly growing revenue (projected >€30M by 2023) but incurring net losses (-€2M in 2023, -€3.7M projected in 2024) due to global expansion.
- **Analysis:** Despite financial and sponsor success, performance stumbles in certain titles demonstrate that strong business infrastructure does not guarantee in-game cohesion. However, continued investments (new titles, expanded geographies) suggest a forward-looking strategy.

### 7.4 FaZe Clan

- **CS2 Roster Overhaul (2025):** Added EliGE (HLTV #19 in 2024), joining rain, broky, karrigan, and frozen.
  - **2024 Major Results:** Twice a runner-up (PGL Copenhagen Major, Shanghai Major), losing to Na'Vi and Team Spirit respectively.
  - **Corporate Merger:** Became part of GameSquare (NASDAQ: GAME), enhancing capital resources but also restructuring leadership.
  - **Analysis:** FaZe's strong brand presence (particularly on social media) and willingness to sign star players remain core to its identity. However, the merger may introduce organizational shifts that could affect short-term stability. FaZe's marketing-first approach continues to attract major partnerships and keeps the brand culturally relevant.
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## 8. Industry Outlook (2024–2025): Opportunities and Challenges

### 8.1 Opportunities

#### 1. CS2 Ecosystem Growth

- New engine updates, in-game content, and major tournaments are expected to attract fresh audiences and sponsor interest.

#### 2. Global Expansion

- Teams like Team Liquid and G2 plan to increase their footprints in the US, China, and emerging esports markets, presenting large untapped fan bases.

#### 3. Diverse Revenue Streams

- Esports stickers, digital collectibles (NFTs), and robust content channels can further monetize fandom.

#### 4. Cross-Industry Collaborations

- Partnerships with celebrities, sports teams, and mainstream media can amplify brand exposure and secure new capital investments.

### 8.2 Challenges

#### 1. Profitability Pressures

- High operational costs (player salaries, global facilities) can lead to ongoing net losses, as evidenced by Team Liquid's projected losses in 2023–2024.

#### 2. Competitive Saturation

- Numerous esports titles compete for organizational resources, sometimes resulting in inconsistent performance across multiple games.

#### 3. Regulatory and Sponsorship Constraints

- Shifting regulatory landscapes around gambling or crypto-based sponsors may limit certain revenue streams.

#### 4. Adaptation to CS2 Meta

- Teams face transitional performance dips as they adapt to new game mechanics, potentially impacting short-term results and sponsor confidence.

#### 5. Investor Relations Post-Consolidation

- Mergers like FaZe Clan and GameSquare, or organizations taking on venture capital, must balance investor demands for profitability with the intangible value of brand-building in esports.

## 9. Conclusion

From 2022 through early 2025, **G2 Esports**, **Natus Vincere (Na'Vi)**, **Team Liquid**, and **FaZe Clan** have illustrated the complex interplay between **financial modeling**, **sponsorship portfolios**, **social media engagement**, and **competitive performance** in CS2. Key takeaways include:

- **Heavy Reliance on Sponsorships and Publisher Payments:** Organizations commonly derive 60–90% of their revenue from brand collaborations and publisher contributions, underscoring the critical nature of partner relationships.
- **Strategic Investment in Social Media and Branding:** All four organizations demonstrate that robust social media presence—bolstered by influencer marketing, short-form video, and behind-the-scenes content—drives fan engagement and sponsor satisfaction.
- **Variance in Competitive Results vs. Organizational Ambition:** While certain teams (Na'Vi, G2) sustain high-level success in Counter-Strike, others (Team Liquid, FaZe Clan) navigate roster changes, internal conflicts, or short-term performance dips, emphasizing that financial strength does not guarantee peak performance.
- **Positive Long-Term Outlook with Short-Term Volatility:** With the momentum surrounding CS2, digital item markets, and global expansion, the industry trajectory through 2024–2025 is broadly optimistic. Yet, concerns regarding continued net losses, regulatory complications, and post-merger integration persist.

As the esports sector matures, these top-tier teams serve as bellwethers, showcasing the delicate balance between **competitive excellence** and **robust business operations**. The lessons gleaned from these leading organizations will likely influence industry practices, investment strategies, and governance models in the next phase of esports evolution.

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## Key References and Suggested Further Reading

### 1. Tournament Performance Data

- ESL, BLAST Premier, and PGL official websites for prize pools and match results (2022–2025).

### 2. Financial Disclosures

- Press releases and investor relations pages from Team Liquid, FaZe Clan (GameSquare), and organization-specific annual reports.

### 3. Sponsorship Announcements

- Official websites and social media channels of Natus Vincere, G2 Esports, Team Liquid, and FaZe Clan.

#### 4. Industry Analytics

- Shikenso Analytics, HLTV, Esports Charts, and other data providers for real-time and historical viewership statistics.

**Author's Note:** While this paper leverages the most recent available information (through early 2025), the esports market remains dynamic. Changes in sponsorship, game metas, and organizational structures can occur rapidly. Readers are encouraged to consult official team and league statements for the latest developments.