knowledge snapshot

A systematic review on corporate social responsibility in the gambling industry

What this article is about

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the way that organizations embed social, environmental, and economic concerns into what they do. In doing so, organizations use better practices to both create wealth and improve society. CSR activities go beyond what is legally or contractually required. The business of gambling operators can harm both people who gamble and society in general. Gambling operators use CSR to get positive publicity and defend their existence. CSR can also help increase the value of gambling operators in the eye of stakeholders.

As part of their CSR activities, gambling operators use responsible gambling (RG) strategies, actions, or policies. RG can help minimize negative consequences on people who gamble. RG can also help gambling operators provide benefits to local communities. Examples of RG include deposit limits, self-exclusion, education about making changes to one's gambling habits, and employee training on problem gambling.

The authors conducted a systematic review of previous research on CSR in gambling. They aimed to understand the current state of knowledge on the socially responsible behaviour of gambling operators.

What was done?

First, the authors searched the Web of Science database for relevant sources. The authors searched for (1) 'corporate social responsibility' OR 'CSR' AND (2) 'gambling' or 'gaming.' A total of 102 articles were identified.

Articles considered for inclusion had to be published in English in a peer reviewed journal. Articles could be published any time between 2001 until December 31,

Why is this article important?

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the way that organizations embed social, environmental, and economic concerns into what they do. Gambling operators use CSR to get positive publicity and defend their existence. This systematic review examined the current state of knowledge on the socially responsible behaviour of gambling operators. A total of 53 articles were included. Articles had to be published in English in a peer-reviewed journal. More than half (53%) of the articles used quantitative methods. Most articles focused on the issue of CSR from the point of view of gambling companies (58%). The authors identified four main research topics: (1) effects of CSR; (2) CSR reporting; (3) CSR implementation; and (4) responsible gambling. The focus of the articles shifted between 2001 and 2019. Between 2001 and 2015, articles mostly focused on the effects of CSR. Between 2019 and 2021, CSR reporting and responsible gambling started to become important topics.

2021. The authors then screened the records and excluded articles based on a review of the abstracts. Next, the authors read through the full text of the remaining articles. After this process, a total of 53 articles were included in the review.

What you need to know

The first article on CSR in the gambling industry was published in 2001. More articles about this topic were not published until 2008. Interest in this topic grew over the years. Almost half of the included articles were published between 2019 and 2021 (42%).

The journal with the most published articles on CSR in the gambling industry was the *Journal of Business Ethics* (6 articles). More than half (53%) of the articles used quantitative methods (e.g., survey). Most articles focused on the issue of CSR from the point of view of gambling companies (58%). About 15% focused on people who gamble and 13% on employees.

The authors identified four main research topics: (1) effects of CSR; (2) CSR reporting; (3) CSR implementation; and (4) responsible gambling (RG). The focus of articles shifted between 2001 and 2019. Between 2001 and 2015, articles mostly focused on the effects of CSR. Between 2019 and 2021, CSR reporting and RG became increasingly important.

Effects of CSR: Many articles focused on the effects associated with CSR activities of gambling operators. For example, the benefits, motives, or drivers that influenced gambling operators to engage in CSR (e.g., the impact of CSR activities on legitimacy, image, shared value, financial performance). Some articles talked about the impact of CSR on society. Others talked about the effects of CSR on individual stakeholders (e.g., people who gamble, employees).

CSR Reporting: More articles focusing on how gambling operators communicate CSR were published in recent years. Some discussed channels for communicating CSR (e.g., social networks, websites, and CSR stand-alone reports). None of these studies looked at CSR communication in annual reports. Some studies examined the level of and problems around CSR reporting/communicating.

CSR Implementation: Many articles published between 2016 and 2018 focused on CSR implementation. These studies examined the strategies used to implement CSR. Other studies assessed the performance of and barriers to implementing CSR activities. Most of these studies examined this topic from the point of view of gambling operators in Macau.

Responsible Gambling: The topic of RG has become increasingly important in recent years. The focus of the included studies was mostly on RG programmes. There was less focus on individual forms of RG. Most studies examined RG from the point of view of people who gamble in casinos (e.g., attitudes about voluntary limit-setting). Other studies examined RG from the point of view of gambling operators (e.g., effectiveness of RG programmes). Some studies examined how employees of gambling operators viewed RG programmes and RG-related training. But no study linked the perspectives of these three key stakeholders in RG.

Who is it intended for?

Researchers and policy makers can use this review to help direct future efforts on CSR in the gambling industry.

About the researchers

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