There are no translations available.

Abstract This paper examines how it is possible for firms in controversial sectors, which are often marked by social taboos and moral debates, to act in socially responsible ways, and whether a firm can be socially responsible if it produces products harmful to society or individuals. It contends that a utilitarian justification can be used to support the legal and regulated provision of goods and services in these areas, and the regulated and legal provision of these areas produces less harm than the real alternative—illegal and unregulated supply. Utilitarianism is concerned as much with harm minimisation as good maximisation, and both are equally important when it comes to maximising welfare (Bentham 1789, 1970; Mill [1863] 1964). Any adequate theory of CSR must, therefore, have the capacity to handle a business that minimises harm as well as those that more straightforwardly maximise good. In this paper we therefore attempt two tasks. First, we argue that the legal but regulated provision of products and services may be better from an overall utilitarian perspective than a situation in which these harmful or immoral goods and services are illegal but procurable via a black market. Porter and Kramer's (2006) strategic CSR framework is then presented to describe how firms in these controversial sectors can act in socially responsible ways. This model highlights the importance of firm strategy in selecting areas of socially responsible behaviours that can be acted upon by firms in each industry.

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