

# The Challenge of Viral Marketing: Policy Concerns over “Pushing Hands” on the Chinese Internet

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## **Abstract:**

Viral marketing, known as “pushing hands” (*tuishou* in Chinese), has become a de facto practice on the Chinese Internet. It is a form of marketing scheme using paid posters (*tuishous*) in covert operations for a variety of commercial and promotional purposes. This new phenomenon poses a serious challenge to the utopian notion of cyberspace being a decentralized public venue where ordinary individuals are enabled to perform horizontal, interactive, diversified and enlightened communication concerning their own issues and interests. Based on the findings of an ethnographic study of *tuishou* operations in China conducted last summer, one of its first kinds in the Chinese Internet, this discussion mainly focuses on policy issues in relation to the *tuishou* operation. Why is it problematic? What are the problems it has created? Do we have policy solutions for it? If yes, what would be possible ways to define it, set the boundary for it and make it a legitimate and constructive business operation within a healthy environment for civil communication of public interests.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

