



Visual  
Media  
Association

## Industry Insight # 6

NEW ZEALAND

# Getting creative work off screens and back into our hands



## Across the world, creative work has become increasingly confined to screens.

Portfolios, photography, illustration and writing now live almost exclusively online, shaped by platforms, algorithms and endless scroll. Yet globally, and particularly across Australia and New Zealand, a quiet but powerful shift is underway. Creators and audiences alike are seeking tangible, slower, more meaningful ways to engage with content.

The launch of Newspaper Club's new midi (medium-sized) newspaper format captures this moment perfectly. Designed as a sustainable, affordable pathway to bring work off the screen and into physical form, the midi reflects a broader international return to print, one driven not by nostalgia, rather by digital fatigue, environmental awareness and a renewed appreciation for tactile creativity.

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## This shift is strongly evident closer to home.

Recent research commissioned across Australia and New Zealand found 86% of consumers report feeling digitally overwhelmed, highlighting growing fatigue with always-on screens, notifications and digital clutter. In response, physical formats, particularly responsibly produced print, are being rediscovered as a counterbalance to digital overload, offering focus, calm and permanence in an increasingly fragmented media landscape.

The midi format itself is deceptively simple. Slightly larger than A4 and positioned between a brochure and a magazine, it allows creators to print between 16 and 64 pages. What makes it transformative, however, is accessibility. Unlike traditional magazine production, often characterised by high minimum runs and complex logistics, the midi can be printed in quantities as low as a single copy.

For students, freelancers, artists, photographers, illustrators and small studios across Australia, New Zealand and beyond, this dramatically lowers the barrier to entry.

Unlike digital content, designed to be consumed quickly and discarded, print demands deliberation. Every page, image and typographic choice carries weight. That shift in mindset is increasingly valued in a culture dominated by speed and volume.

This matters in markets like ANZ, where creative communities are geographically dispersed and increasingly independent. The ability to experiment with print without financial risk opens up new possibilities, from short-run portfolios and lookbooks to self-published storytelling and visual experimentation, without the pressure of bulk production.

Ease of use further underpins the midi's appeal. With templates compatible with Adobe InDesign and Canva, creators can move seamlessly from digital design to print without specialist technical knowledge. This integration reflects how print is evolving globally, not as a competitor to digital tools, rather as a complementary extension of them. Digital remains essential for reach, print adds depth, presence and longevity.

For many creatives experiencing screen fatigue, designing for print offers something profoundly different. It slows the process. It encourages intentionality. Unlike digital content, designed to be consumed quickly and discarded, print demands deliberation.

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## Audiences feel this difference too. Printed formats command a different kind of attention.

There are no alerts, no blue light, no algorithm dictating what comes next. Turning pages creates a rhythm that invites focus and reflection. This is one reason physical publications are experiencing renewed interest across creative industries globally, and why formats like the midi resonate so strongly with digitally fatigued audiences in Australia and New Zealand.

Sustainability is a critical part of this story. Newspaper Club prints the midi exclusively on FSC-certified papers, including lightweight newsprint and an 80gsm recycled option designed for strong colour reproduction. FSC certification ensures paper is sourced from forests managed to rigorous environmental and ethical standards, while recycled options extend the life cycle of fibres already in circulation. Print-on-demand production further reduces waste, ensuring only what is needed is produced.

This challenges the persistent misconception that digital is inherently more sustainable than print. While digital platforms may be paperless, they rely on energy-intensive infrastructure, finite resources and continuous power consumption. Responsibly sourced print, by contrast, is renewable, recyclable and requires no energy once produced. It can be shared, archived, revisited and valued for decades, a compelling proposition for environmentally conscious creators and consumers alike.



At its core, the midi represents a democratisation of print. Historically, producing a polished physical publication required either scale or industry access. Independent creators often turned to zines as a workaround. **The midi bridges that gap, combining the freedom and experimentation of zine culture with professional production quality.**

Its versatility reflects the diversity of modern creative practice: photographers sequencing visual narratives, designers producing compact lookbooks, writers printing limited samplers, illustrators transforming digital work into collectible objects. Without high minimums or prohibitive costs, creators gain permission to experiment, and to see their work differently.

Holding work in printed form often changes how creators understand their own projects. Colours behave differently on paper. Typography demands greater intention.

The physicality of print introduces nuances that screens flatten. For many, the first printed copy becomes a moment of validation, a tangible expression of creative identity.

For readers navigating constant digital noise, the appeal is equally strong. Printed materials encourage deeper engagement and cognitive ease. Research consistently shows that reading on paper can improve comprehension, retention and emotional connection. **In a world where nearly 50% of ANZ consumers report they wish social media didn't exist and was out of their lives entirely reporting digital saturation, these qualities are no longer niche, they are increasingly essential.**

# Summary:

The growing enthusiasm for formats like the midi signals something important for the future of media and creativity, print is not disappearing - it is evolving. Rather than competing with digital, it complements it, offering balance in a hybrid creative ecosystem.

Newspaper Club's midi format sits comfortably within this global movement, demonstrating how print can adapt to modern workflows, sustainability expectations and creative needs, while retaining the qualities that make it uniquely powerful.

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## Source:

Ellie Ireland (adopted for a global and ANZ context)



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The Visual Media Association (VMA) is the recognised peak industry body for the paper, print, mail, publishing, packaging, graphic design, distribution, and media technology industries across Australia.

Operating for over 141 years, the VMA is a registered organisation with direct signatory to the nine (9) Awards across our industry and membership. VMA offers an end-to-end industry association solution that is relevant in all that it undertakes: advocating the relevance of the established media – print – that we all belong to; developing global partnerships and translating to regional requirements; awarding excellence; investing in products; and arming our industry with sales tools, sustainability collateral, industrial relations representation and more.

The VMA is the largest print industry body, committed to building a stronger united leadership to deliver the goals of our members. United we lead strong advocacy, government advisory, skills and training programs, protection, and promotion of our industry channels and more to ensure our members' businesses operate within a future-proofed strategy for success.

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