

# Engaging International Students through New Media

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Those who are up to speed with developments in new media will recognise the phenomenon of which Meld Magazine is part. Unlike traditional mass media, new media platforms have opened up opportunities to engage intensely and intentionally with a small local audience, encourage new ways of information sharing, spur non-traditional interactions that have an impact on a community, and foster a two-way conversation between audiences and news providers, organisations, businesses, educational institutions and the like.

Established since late 2008, Meld Magazine is the brainchild of former international student Karen Poh, who gave up a career in print journalism to pursue her future in new media. She recognised the gap in the market for a central portal whereby (1) stakeholders in international education can connect with current and prospective international students (2) students past and present can share information with each other and have a voice in the wider community, and (3) be empowered to explore and engage the local Australian culture.

As a not-for-profit start up with very limited resources, Meld Magazine has been able to harness the opportunities in new media to engage international students in Melbourne through its online news website, integrated with social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, and search engine optimisation.

One of the biggest advantages in new media is the ease and speed with which organisations can measure the success of audience engagement. There are a myriad of tools available to track website traffic, audience demographic, traffic sources, most popular content etc.

In the past year alone, Meld Magazine's growing readership – at around 35 per cent month on month or a 150 times annual growth rate – signifies the potential that exists in this new medium of communication.

Beyond lifestyle and entertainment related topics, insights from Meld Magazine's traffic data show international students do have an appetite for news and information such as workplace rights, discrimination, migration woes, sexual health, legal help, violence and mental health.

## **Key Words**

New media, social media, international student engagement, hyperlocal journalism, technology