

Free-to-air TV still the most popular

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Free-to-air television is a 'resilient beast' and is still the most popular way to watch programs or films, a report says.

Despite the introduction of online media, video and social media, 94 per cent of Australians watched free-to-air TV in 2010.

It's a number that has barely changed over the past five years, says Matthew Deaner, manager of statistics and research for the Screen Australia report *Beyond the Box Office: Understanding Audiences in a Multi-screen World*.

'Free-to-air TV is a very resilient beast,' he told industry members in Sydney on Monday.

'It's huge compared to every other media outlet and it remains the leading way of viewing screen content, at three hours per day on average.'

PricewaterhouseCoopers executive director Megan Brownlow said there were several reasons for this resilience in both free-to-air TV and subscription TV.

Subscription TV participation was 19 per cent in 2010, again at similar levels to the previous five years.

Ms Brownlow said these reasons included more content being available and improvements such as time-shifted viewing, where shows can be recorded for viewing at a later time or date.

'And that's has shown, and very happily for drama as a genre, increases of audience of up to 10 per cent for some shows,' she said.

Strategist and CEO of Universal McCann Australia Mat Baxter said TV just keeps getting stronger at the expense of other channels and it's not likely to change anytime soon.

'The notion of kicking back and putting up your feet after a hard day at the office and being entertained in front of a screen,' he said. 'That will continue on forever.'

The report was based on three stages of research, which began with a survey of 50,000 face-to-face interviews with people over 14 years.

It also included two stages of research based on diary entries, with approximately 20,000 responses nationally on each.

The report also found that people watching cinema or console gaming has slightly increased over five years, while DVD or Blu-Ray video fell.

The fall in DVD and Blu-ray was offset by growth in online video.

As for how Australian cinema fared in the report, it found that, as of February this year, 101 million viewings had been recorded for the home-grown feature films released in cinemas from 2007-2009.

Of this, 65 per cent were on video, 26 per cent were on television and just nine per cent were at the cinema.