

Net users still tuned in to TV

Neil Shoebridge

The relentless rise of the internet is having little or no impact on the time people devote to other media, with the consumption of television, radio and books by internet users rising in 2009.

The latest edition of The Nielsen Company's annual internet and technology report, which was released today, shows that internet users spent an average of 17.6 hours a week online last year, up 9 per cent from 16.1 hours in 2008 and 28.5 per cent from 13.7 hours in 2007.

Eighty-four per cent of Australians use the internet. Ninety-three per cent of those people use it at home; of those, 98 per cent have broadband connections. Internet users with broadband access spent an average of 19.7 hours a week online, up from 18.5 hours in 2008.

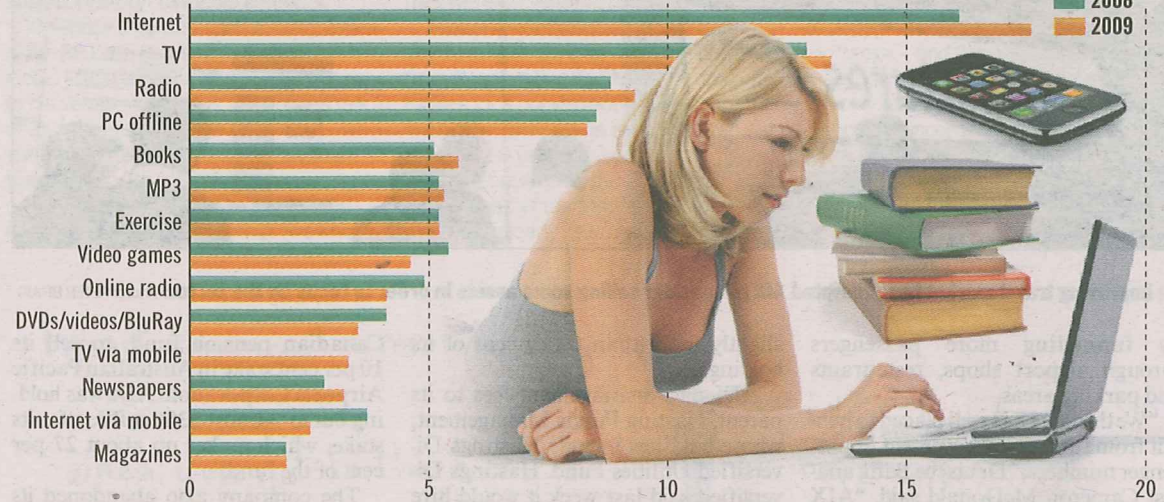
But the Nielsen report, which is based on interviews with 2371 people, reveals the time internet users spent watching TV rose from an average of 12.9 hours a week in 2008 to 13.4 hours last year, and the time spent listening to the radio increased from 8.8 hours to 9.3 hours.

Respondents also said they were spending more time reading books – an average of 5.6 hours a week last year, compared with 5.1 hours in 2008 – and newspapers (3.2 hours in 2009, up from 2.8 hours). The time spent reading magazines was steady at two hours a week.

Matt Bruce, managing director of Nielsen's online business in Australia, said the increase in internet usage last year was driven, in part, by the time people spent on social media sites. Facebook, for example,

As time goes by

Time spent on media and leisure activities by internet users (hours/week)



SOURCE: THE NIELSEN COMPANY

accounted for 21 per cent of total online time.

Few media and leisure activities showed a decline in the time people devote to them. For video games the drop was from 5.4 hours a week to 4.6 hours, highlighting the ability of internet users to “multi-task media”.

“Changes to the Australian media landscape in recent years such as the introduction of Freeview TV [the name free-to-air TV networks are using to promote their digital channels], digital radio and digital video recorders mean consumers have more options and flexibility in their media choices than ever before,” Mr Bruce said.

“This is reflected in the growth of hours spent across a range of media

and the popularity of media multi-tasking.”

Just under half of internet users are online and watching traditional TV (that is, not TV delivered via the internet) at the same time, while 39 per cent use the internet and listen to traditional radio at the same time.

But simultaneous media consumption is on the wane: in 2008, 61 per cent of internet users said they were online and watching TV at the same time, and 50 per cent said they used the internet and listened to radio simultaneously.

Thirty-one per cent of the people polled said they did not “multi-task” media, compared with 19 per cent in 2008 and 20 per cent in 2007.

Nielsen says the heaviest users of the

internet are people aged 16 to 29, who spend an average of 22 hours a week online. People aged 30 to 49 spend 18.2 hours a week online and people 50 and older spend 15.5 hours a week. The latter age group's weekly TV consumption is 15.6 hours.

Across all age groups, men spend an average of 19.2 hours online a week and women 16.1 hours.

The growth of podcasts and online-only radio stations has not led to an increase in the time spent listening to online radio: this fell from 4.9 hours in 2008 to 4.1 hours last year.

Accessing the internet via mobile phones also fell out of favour, accounting for an average of 2.5 hours a week among internet users, down from 3.7 hours in 2008.