



EdWagon

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Still in the game

DESPITE THE EXPLOSION OF CONTENT ACROSS DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA, KBC CONTINUES TO DRAW EYEBALLS & ADVERTISERS

CHRISTINA MONIZ

AT A TIME when Gen Z is dominating the news cycle with memes and reels, Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) has brought back Bollywood veteran 83-year-old Amitabh Bachchan to host the latest season of *Kaun Banega Crorepati* (KBC). The show's 18th season kicked off on Monday with over 25 sponsors — including brands like Google Gemini, Maruti Suzuki and Aditya Birla Group — for television. It is expected to run for six months with 120 episodes, enabling advertisers to build recall.

"Add Amitabh Bachchan's pull, clean and culturally rooted content, and a prime-time format families can watch together, and its appeal becomes universal," says Rajesh Patalia, chief strategy officer, AGENCY09. "That is why KBC continues to draw audiences across ages, genders and geographies." The whole idea of spotlighting everyday contestants has also helped to transform a regular quiz show into an emotional journey that has the possibility of changing people's lives.

The network is said to have raked in close to ₹400 crore in ad revenues in its 2025 season. This season, said the network, KBC has delivered an 80% year-on-year increase in advertising revenue on Sony LIV, with premium CPMs (cost per mille, where "mille" is Latin for thousand) rising 50% compared to the previous season, highlighting growing advertiser appetite for premium digital entertainment properties.

Nisha Sampath, managing partner, Bright Angles Consulting, says the show represents India's two biggest and most timeless aspirations: To make one's fortune, and to have the privilege of coming up close and personal with a movie star. "The beauty of the show is that it fulfils at least one aspiration for all participants," she says.

Little wonder that 26 years after its debut, brands continue to endorse KBC. "Above all else, KBC

offers a feel-good experience to all participants," says Patalia. Viewers are not passive but play along, and test their own knowledge while watching the show. Digital play-along apps and home-winner segments help the massive at-home audience participate actively. More than the questions or the prize money won, their focus is also on the dynamics of the participant's interactions with the star.

In keeping with the changing

times, the producers adjusted the gameplay focus toward reasoning and high-pressure decision-making, acknowledging that fact-based answers are widely accessible via AI tools.

Beyond ad inventory

Reality content has been a major draw for audiences across broadcast channels and platforms. Experts note that shows like KBC deliver appointment viewing,

strong audience stickiness and multiple monetisation avenues in terms of advertiser integrations and spot ads. However, it faces competition from shows like *Bigg Boss* and *Khatron Ke Khiladi* especially during the festive months.

Interestingly, while many other shows depend on volatile characters or racy content to push boundaries and draw eyeballs, KBC scores largely on brand safety and trust.

Brijen Desai, associate vice-president, client servicing, White Rivers Media, says reality formats focus on personalities, relationships, and social conflict within controlled environments. Brands leverage KBC for contexts involving

achievement and family viewing. "Amitabh Bachchan gives audiences the familiarity they associate with the show, while contestants, questions and themes change every season," he says.

In recent seasons, the network has weaved in more content integrations for brands that go beyond just purchasing advertising spots.

Jaquar Lights, which is one of the sponsors on the show for both TV and OTT, is doing exactly that. Its association with KBC has been designed to go beyond traditional advertising by integrating Jaquar Lights into the viewing experience. During select moments in the game, Bachchan will cue the lighting sequence with "turn on the Jaquar Lights" accompanied by Jaquar Lights branding on the screen. "This creates a contextual and memorable brand moment that blends seamlessly into the show's format," says Sandeep Shukla, VP, marketing, Jaquar Group.

The brand is also running a contest on the SonyLIV app, allowing viewers a chance to win invites to experience KBC live in the studio.



STAYING AGELESS



KBC first aired on Star Plus in July 2000



It moved to **Sony Television** in 2010

Season 18 has over **25 TV advertisers;**
Google Gemini on board for the first time

Linear TV ad rates are **₹3.5 to ₹3.7 lakh** per 10 seconds



Ad rates are **₹250-300 CPM** (cost per mille) on mobile
& **₹500-600 CPM** (cost per mille) on CTV