

= Bill Cosby in advertising =

American comedian Bill Cosby was a popular spokesperson for advertising from the 1960s ? before his first starring television role ? until the early 2000s . He started with White Owl cigars , and later endorsed Jell @-@ O pudding and gelatin , Coca @-@ Cola (including New Coke) , Texas Instruments , E. F. Hutton & Co . , Kodak , and the 1990 United States Census . As of 2002 , Cosby held the record for being the longest @-@ serving celebrity spokesperson for a product , through his work with Jell @-@ O . In 2011 , he won the President 's Award for Contributions to Advertising from the Advertising Hall of Fame .

Cosby was one of the first black people to appear in the United States as an advertising spokesperson . He was known for his appeal to white consumers in the second half of the 20th century , in an industry seen as slow to accept diversity . In spite of making contradictory soft drink pitches and endorsing a disgraced financial company , he continued to be considered effective and believable . In the 1980s , studies found Cosby the " most familiar " and " most persuasive " spokesperson , to the point where Cosby attributed his wealth to these contracts , as opposed to his television series . However , in 2014 , allegations of sexual assault significantly damaged Cosby 's public image ; public opinion polling following the news placed him near the bottom of a list of 3 @, @ 000 personalities , when rated on trust and effectiveness .

= = Personality = =

Anthony Tortorici , director of public relations at Coca @-@ Cola , told Black Enterprise magazine in 1981 that the " three most believable personalities are God , Walter Cronkite , and Bill Cosby . " At the peak of his advertising career in the mid @-@ 1980s , Cosby had a Q Score of 70 , meaning that 70 percent of those responding to a survey of 1 @, @ 000 United States residents thought highly of him , thus deeming him the most familiar and persuasive endorser . In 2003 , industry publication Advertising Age said that " during [Cosby 's] 14 @-@ year reign over the ad industry 's public approval index [he had only been surpassed by] the Pope . In 2012 , the separate Celebrity DBI index listed Cosby as second most @-@ trusted celebrity on a list of celebrities people pay attention to on television , behind Morgan Freeman .

Professionally , Coca @-@ Cola advertising director John Bergin considered Cosby the company 's " greatest weapon " ; he said , " magic happens when the camera starts . " His enthusiasm was tempered on a personal level , finding him " inconceivably arrogant " and mentioned " blow @-@ ups " on the set .

One biographer of Cosby , Linda Etkin , said , " Cosby comes across as a father figure , a teacher , and a friend " in his advertisements . William Turner , in 1982 the marketing manager for Texas Instruments ' consumer products group , said Cosby " represents comfort , and people trust him " . In 2014 , one educator asked for comment said he remembered Cosby as a " black male authority figure , one of those people who folks that don 't live on the edges of the country think of as a good black guy ; they trust that guy " . In 1988 , a representative for Kodak said Cosby had become " synonymous with quality products and quality services " . Ebony agreed , saying Cosby has the advantage of being able to be selective . Cosby said his belief in their product is an attribute , stating , " if I presented a Bill Cosby who didn 't care , their sales would stop right there on the screen . Obviously , I could never do that . Once I believe in the product I aim to sell it , and that 's what I think I do better than anybody " .

An article in Black Enterprise said part of Cosby 's mystique is " that he can endorse a number of products and still retain credibility in each individual sell " . Shortly after being signed by Coca @-@ Cola , Cosby appeared at a bottlers ' convention . He refused to drink the bottle of Coke he carried on stage , saying , " I 'm waiting for all the Jell @-@ O pudding I ate to settle " . Cosby said that in childhood , he experienced " periods of addiction " to Coca Cola , consuming fifteen bottles by 2 pm .

= = Career in advertising = =

=== 1960s ===

The American advertising industry was initially reluctant to use black spokespeople for fear of angering white customers . The Nat King Cole Show (1956 @-@ 1957) , the first nationally @-@ syndicated U.S. television series to be hosted by an African American , never found a national sponsor ; after its cancellation Cole said , " Madison Avenue is afraid of the dark " .

Cosby 's first advertisement was for White Owl cigars . He liked their slogan , " We 're going to get you " , so he had his agent Norman Brokaw of William Morris Agency inquire about Cosby becoming their spokesperson . Cosby had appeared several times on the late @-@ night talk program The Tonight Show , a signifier of success in American comedy , although his television series I Spy had yet to debut . Cosby later said there were no commercials " with a black person holding something , buying a product , so the absence of pictures , in retrospect , said a lot " . Despite the stigma among advertisers around using a black spokesperson , sales of the product rose . According to an entry in Ad Age Encyclopedia , the public acceptance of Cosby and Robert Culp appearing as equals on I Spy made it possible for advertisers to show black people and white people together in their commercials .

The Bill Cosby Radio Program , which debuted in 1968 , was sponsored by The Coca @-@ Cola Company . The series was syndicated to over 200 radio stations by McCann Erickson , Coca @-@ Cola 's advertising agency .

=== 1970s ===

In 1974 , Cosby began promoting Jell @-@ O pudding for General Foods . Cosby said comedian Jack Benny , whose program the brand sponsored , was the only previous spokesman for Jell @-@ O , but Kate Smith , Lucille Ball , and Andy Griffith have also pitched the brand . In previous campaigns since the brand 's launch in 1902 , it was targeted towards parents rather than to children , a practice from which the company departed in 2001 . Cosby 's early commercials were unscripted , but later were written by comedy writers . Cosby disagreed with the writers , who wanted to say the food was for when you were " hungry " ; Cosby thought there was not enough substance to satisfy hunger and wanted to use the word " appetite " . In 1979 , General Foods introduced Pudding Pops , the company 's first frozen dessert product . With Cosby as spokesperson , it sold US \$ 100 million its first year . After introducing Gelatin Pops and frozen Fruit Bars , the company 's frozen desserts sales reached \$ 300 million . Cosby was engaged to promote the flagging Jell @-@ O gelatin product line in the mid @-@ 1980s , when General Foods introduced a holdable Jell @-@ O product called " Jigglers " . Sales increased seven percent during the first year of the promotion .

Cosby appeared in commercials for Coca @-@ Cola 's 1979 campaign , " Coke and a Smile , " and made a guest appearance at the Great Get @-@ Together , a major bottlers ' convention held that year . This campaign continued into 1981 .

His work in this decade was well received . Advertising Age named Cosby the top advertising personality of 1978 . In 1999 , Advertising Age magazine named Cosby 's 1975 Jell @-@ O commercials , which they called " Bill Cosby with kids " , the 92nd best advertising campaign of all time .

=== 1980s ===

Black Enterprise magazine found that Cosby was one of only a very few African Americans who could command among the highest fees paid for advertising spokespeople . The 1981 feature also highlighted how rare it was for African Americans to be hired for a complete campaign , as opposed to a single advertisement , despite an overall increase in opportunities . Cosby 's agents told the magazine he had earned at least \$ 3 million in current advertising contracts ? about one @-@ fifth

of his income ? the rest of which he earned from live performances .

Cosby returned as Coca @-@ Cola 's spokesperson in its 1982 " Coke Is It " campaign , a series of commercials mocking the Pepsi Challenge . One advertisement in this series showed a Pepsi vending machine to mock the brand , which author Mark Pendergrast called " unthinkable " . Another said Pepsi Challenge commercials were misleading because they never showed anyone choosing Coke . John Bergin , who directed the series of commercials , personally disliked Cosby but said his presence in Coca @-@ Cola advertising ended the first Pepsi Challenge campaign in 1983 .

In mid @-@ 1982 , Cosby was hired by Texas Instruments to appear in television advertisements for the company 's TI @-@ 99 / 4A home computer . He was to be paid \$ 1 million a year for the campaign . The company touted Cosby 's education and rapport with adults and children . The campaign was aimed at parents , rather than children , as was the campaign for the Commodore 64 . Cosby was the face of a mystery rebate program , offering reimbursements of between \$ 3 and \$ 1 @,@ 000 . J. Fred Bucy , who was head of Texas Instruments ' home computer operation in 1983 , scrapped Cosby 's advertisements to focus on the product 's educational value . Radio Shack vice @-@ president of marketing David Beckerman said , " A celebrity draws attention to the product . Even if we had President Reagan on our ads , we wouldn 't sell any more computers . A product sells itself . A celebrity causes indirect sales . " Cosby , along with entrepreneur James Bruce Llewellyn , bought stock in a Philadelphia Coca @-@ Cola bottler in 1983 as part of the company 's push to increase African American participation in the company . This was , in part , a response to pressure by Jesse Jackson 's PUSH campaign .

At the height of the Cola Wars , marketer Sergio Zyman persuaded Coca @-@ Cola executives to create and air commercials with Cosby praising Coke for being less sweet than Pepsi , which was aired only in areas where sales of Pepsi were dominant . One commercial from the series features Cosby " rubberfacing an icky frown " and describing Pepsi as " gooey " . These advertisements were broadcast from October 1984 ; Coca @-@ Cola 's independently owned bottlers demanded the commercials were run in their markets as well . Zyman said despite the upcoming contradiction , the ads were the first boost to Coke 's image in years . Coca @-@ Cola was simultaneously testing possible new variations of its soft drink and decided it would sell more product if it used a sweeter formula . Once New Coke was launched , Pepsi prepared its public response to the change ; among its talking points for journalists writing about New Coke was to " Ask them about those Bill Cosby ads " . One of a new series of Coke advertisements showed Cosby dressed in a toga ; this campaign was described as unconvincing . Coca @-@ Cola faced a widespread public backlash , internal dissent , and ultimately the original drink recipe returned as " Coca @-@ Cola Classic " . In the days following the reversal , an editorial cartoon featured Cosby pouring a can of Pepsi into a can of Coke . Marcio Moreira , a McCann Erickson creative executive behind the New Coke introduction , said in 2011 that the decision to hire Cosby was not made until other commercials were being edited .

The Cosby Show debuted in 1984 , becoming " TV 's biggest hit in the 1980s " and reviving both the sitcom genre and NBC . Before the series premiere , Cosby told reporters his income from commercials for Coke , Ford , and , his Las Vegas shows , had made him financially secure . At some point before 1985 , Cosby featured in advertisements for Bird 's Eye frozen foods .

In 1986 , Cosby 's only contract was with Jell @-@ O , but by the end of the year he had added two more endorsements . By August , Cosby began promoting E. F. Hutton & Co. with a series of print and television advertisements , and comedy concerts . The company had been accused of fraud and needed a spokesperson who was well @-@ liked . Soon after Cosby 's commercials aired , the company merged with Morgan Stanley Smith Barney . In late December , he added J. Walter Thompson agency account Kodak Colorwatch System photographic processing system to his list . The estimated \$ 10 million contract included commercials featuring Cosby to run in print , on television , as point of sale , and in promotional programs .

Coca @-@ Cola purchased Columbia Pictures in 1982 . In 1987 , Columbia decided revenues from its spy comedy Leonard Part 6 (1987) would offset its losses on ' Ishtar (1987) . Leading up to release , Columbia announced it would spend \$ 12 million on " synergies " with the film , taking into

account the success of Cosby 's television series and record sales for his parenting book , Fatherhood . Promotions included posters , spy cameras , point of sale standees of Cosby , and a contest to win Porsche cars . Cosby , who acted in and produced the film , was initially supportive of it , but close to the release date he publicly distanced himself from it . The film failed , with a net loss of \$ 33 million .

In the 1980s , Cosby also appeared in public service announcements . To increase black participation in the 1990 United States Census , the bureau recruited Cosby , Magic Johnson , Alfre Woodard , and Miss America Debbye Turner as spokespeople .

= = = 1990s to 2010s = = =

Cosby continued to be a Jell @-@ O spokesman through the 1990s . He was present for the lighting of the brand 's first billboard in New York 's Times Square in 1998 . In 1999 , Cosby 's 25th year as spokesman for Jell @-@ O , was also the final year he appeared in its advertising . The company distributed 120 @,@ 000 copies of his picture book series , Little Bill , into American public libraries . Despite the transitions of advertising agencies and the 1989 merger of General Foods into Kraft , Cosby remained with Jell @-@ O. He appeared at the Utah State Senate in 2001 to designate Jell @-@ O the official state snack , and made a promotional visit to the Jell @-@ O Gallery in 2004 . In 2010 , Cosby returned to Jell @-@ O as executive producer for the company 's " Hello Jell @-@ O " campaign . In return , the brand sponsored his weekly web show OBKB , a children 's interview series similar to Kids Say the Darndest Things . As of 2002 , Cosby 's time with Jell @-@ O was considered the longest @-@ standing celebrity endorsement in American advertising history .

At the Advertising Hall of Fame induction ceremonies on March 30 , 2011 , Cosby was the first winner of the American Advertising Federation 's President 's Award for Contributions to Advertising , for special achievements in the field .

= = Criticism = =

In 1973 , The Village Voice writer Terry Guerin said Cosby was past his prime . Among the reasons , " making spokesman commercials for such established heels as White Owl cigars and Pan American airlines . He has evolved into a kind of self @-@ parodying sap , the kind of flagrant , perpetual parader Sammy Davis has always been " . " The Noble Cos , " a 1986 satirical editorial by Edward Sorel for The Nation , was written in Cosby 's imagined voice . It echoed the comments of other authors that Cosby had become out @-@ of @-@ touch with lower @-@ class African Americans . In response to this sentiment , Cosby said in 1997 , " So this buddy says , ' I didn 't mind your commercials for Jello , Del Monte , Ford cars ... Ideal Toys , or Coca @-@ Cola , although Coke does do business in South Africa ... But , Bill , why do commercials for those crooks at E. F. Hutton ? ' My buddy didn 't understand my commercials improve race relations . Y 'see , by showing that a black man can be just as money @-@ hungry as a white man ... I 'm proving that all men are brothers . "

In 1981 , Cosby told Black Enterprise magazine :

In this business , many of us are well paid but we are not all that wealthy . You may read ' X @-@ number of dollar goes to so and so , ' but remember , everybody takes a cut ? the lawyer , the agent , the publicist . If a company comes along and says ' We 'd like you to talk about how much you enjoy wearing this warm @-@ up suit , ' and the money is right , I 'm going to do it . Jell @-@ O was a dessert in my house when I was a kid . My mom served Del Monte fruit cocktail when I was growing up . They want to pay me to say I eat these products , well , I eat them . I came out of a lower economic area , and this is money . This is a business ... show business . A great deal of our careers depends on keeping ourselves in the public eye . I think performers should take advantage of commercial offers if they 're satisfied with the product .

= = = Sexual assault and rape allegations = = =

In October 2014 , a stand @-@ up comedy routine by Hannibal Buress , addressing allegations of rape against Cosby , went viral on YouTube . On November 10 , Cosby posted a message requesting meme images , using a hashtag of # CosbyMeme , on his Twitter feed . Many of the images posted in response related to the allegations , which were fresh in the respondents ' minds . After numerous women came forward as victims of Cosby 's alleged actions , a television special and a series in development were cancelled . Cosby refused to address the situation ; his lawyer said such actions would dignify " decade @-@ old , discredited " allegations . Many media outlets commented on the way such actions clashed with his image as " America 's Dad " . One of the accusers felt nobody would believe her claims at the time of the alleged incident , given Cosby 's status in advertising . Joan Tarshis told the media that Cosby was " Mr America ; Mr Jello , as I called him " .

The publicity surrounding the allegations had a drastic effect on Cosby 's reputation , as seen in the following drop in his ratings . In March 2013 , Cosby had a 76 @.@ 3 rating on the Davie @-@ Brown Index , a rating of the public perceptions of roughly 3500 personalities published by Omnicom Group company The Marketing Arm , placing him as the third most @-@ trusted celebrity , behind Morgan Freeman and Dr. Mehmet Oz . By November 19 , this had fallen to 57 @.@ 1 , placing him at either the 2,626th spot or 2615th , depending on the source . The same company 's separate rating on who consumers view as an " effective product spokesperson " saw Cosby drop to 2,746th spot ; at one point , he had been 5th . Awareness of Cosby increased from 63rd to 51st . The Marketing Arm warns about misinterpreting the ratings fall ; it said 900 celebrities were within the margin of error for Cosby 's rating . At the time of the accusations , E @-@ Poll Market Research had not updated its scores ; a Q Score for Cosby was not expected until 2015 . The executive vice @-@ president of Q Scores Co. said polling in the midst of a scandal would likely overstate the score 's longterm effects . All three companies ' scores are updated at different intervals , meaning they are not directly comparable . Jell @-@ O was relatively unaffected on social media by allegations against Cosby . The brand was mentioned in one percent of posts about Cosby , which was considered low . Still , negative connections continued , including by rapper Eminem in a freestyle rap , and an article by Food Drink and Franchise magazine pointed out moments in commercials that were awkward in retrospect .