

**Research Question:** How did different mass media outlets communicate the EU referendum campaign? To what extent did their strategy influence voters?

**Hypothesis:** This research indicates that the majority of the press was heavily skewed in favour of Brexit and this may have had some influence on the voters.

**Interview:** Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Labour MP)

**Abstract:** The reason why we have chosen TV, social media and newspapers as our mass media outlets is due to its popularity within the UK. "TV is the most-used platform for news nowadays by UK adults (79%), followed by the internet (64%) [...] and newspapers (40%)."<sup>1</sup>

In order to validate my hypothesis, I asked Labour MP Dr Rosena Allin-Khan whether she trusts what newspapers print in respect to political coverage. She writes "Yes. Most definitely."<sup>2</sup> This is an example of how influential the press is, even on politicians.

David Levy, Billur Aslan and Diego Bironzo analysed the press coverage during the Referendum campaign in 2016. Their results "come from analysis of two sample days per week (Tuesday & Saturday) of press coverage in the London Editions of the 9 National newspapers during [...] the referendum campaign."<sup>3</sup> They write that

[o]f the 1558 articles focused on the referendum (an average of 52 per day studied across 9 newspapers), 41% were in favour of leaving, with only 27% in favour of staying in the EU. 23% were categorised as "mixed or undecided" and 9% as adopting no position.<sup>4</sup>

The researchers state that

*The Daily Express* had the highest share of pro-leave articles (75% of all its articles about the referendum, compared to only 5% of pro-remain ones) followed by *The Daily Mail* (61% vs. 14%). A majority of the articles published in *The Sun*, *The Daily Star* and *The Telegraph* were also pro-leave, while the newspapers with the highest share of pro-remain articles were, in order, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mirror*, and *The Financial Times*. *The Times* coverage was relatively evenly balanced between positions.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the following newspapers had the highest share of pro-leave articles in that order:

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<sup>1</sup> Jigsaw Research (2017-2018) "News consumption in the UK: 2018", Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2018, November/December 2017 and March/April 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (February 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Levy, David eds. (2016) "The press and the Referendum campaign" in Jackson, Daniel eds. *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign* (United Kingdom: The Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community), p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

*The Daily Express*

*The Daily Mail*

*The Sun*

*The Daily Star*

*The Telegraphy*

& the following pro-remain:

*The Guardian*

*The Daily Mirror*

*The Financial Times*

& the following balanced:

*The Times*

During my interview with Dr Rosena Allin-Khan I asked her “which two newspapers [she] think[s] contrast their coverage in relation to Brexit in general?” She believes that “*The Sun* [is] very pro leave and *The Guardian* [...] pro remain.”<sup>6</sup> She adds that “[t]he language changes according to the views the papers present.”<sup>7</sup> This supports Levy, Aslan and Bironzo’s analysis and demands further evaluation to understand the difference between them.

In order to receive a simple understanding of the differences between the left- and right-wing newspaper coverages, I looked into newspaper archives to find front pages of *The Sun* and *The Guardian* aligned with the two sample days per week (Tuesday & Saturday) used by Levy, Aslan and Bironzo’s. The reason I chose to evaluate these two newspapers is inspired by Dr Rosena Allin-Khan’s opinion.

During my research, I found that *The Sun*, and more specifically the pro-leave article published on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016, focused on non-elite interactions, employing a classic KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) strategy, reportedly coined by Kelly Johnson in 1960.<sup>8</sup> The following front page states, or rather “shouts”; “BeLEAVE in Britain”.<sup>9</sup> The use of alliteration here influences the reader to remember the words which are easily understandable and open for interpretations by different social groups. It is significant that this KISS approach continues throughout the article. Instead of complicated economic information, the article adopts a general overview as to why “WE” should

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (February 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Rich, Ben R. (1995) *Clarence Leonard (Kelly Johnson 1910-1990: A Bibliographical Memoir* (United States, Washington DC: National Academies Press), p. 231.

<sup>9</sup> The Sun (2016) “BeLEAVE in Britain”, *The Sun*, 14th June.

vote leave.<sup>10</sup> The article writes that “[s]taying in will be worse for immigrations, worse for jobs, worse for wages and worse for our way of life” with the conclusion that “[r]emain’ is bigger risk in every way.”<sup>11</sup>

*The Guardian*, and more specifically the pro-remain article published on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2016, in contrast, focused on economic risks which only a number of citizens were able to understand such as the elite and highly educated. Significantly, instead of the KISS principle expert terminology is applied. The title of the front page states, in a rather uncreative manner; “Osborne: Brexit will mean rise in mortgage rates.”<sup>12</sup> If the reader does not read the rest of the article and has no understanding about financial literacy it could be open to misinterpretation where the word “rise” could be viewed incorrectly as a positive. Additionally, this extract only addresses people with sufficient financial means that have their own homes which immediately excludes a significant number of citizens.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Neate, Rupert and Allen, Katie (2016) “Osborne: Brexit will mean rise in mortgage rates”, *The Guardian*, 16<sup>th</sup> April.

Newspaper Sources:

**THE Sun**  
 Tuesday, June 14, 2016 BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING PAPER 50p thesun.co.uk

**Oh Roo behave**  
 WAYNE'S PLEA TO ENGLAND FANS

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# Be LEAVE in Britain

**THE Sun SAYS**

**WE are about to make the biggest political decision of our lives. The Sun today urges everyone to vote LEAVE.**

We must set ourselves free from dictatorial Brussels.

Throughout our 43-year membership of the European Union it has proved increasingly greedy, wasteful, bullying and breathtakingly incompetent in a crisis.

Next Thursday, at the ballot box, we can correct this huge and historic mistake.

*It is our last chance. Because, be in no doubt, our future looks far bleaker if we stay in.*

Outside the EU we can become richer, safer and free at long last to forge our own destiny – as America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many other great democracies already do. And as we were the first to do centuries ago.

If we stay, Britain will be engulfed in a few short years by this relentlessly expanding German-dominated federal state. For all David Cameron's witless assurances, our powers and values **WILL** be further eroded. Staying in will be

worse for immigration, worse for jobs, worse for wages and worse for our way of life.

Greece is bankrupt. Italy is in danger of going the same way, with even more disastrous consequences. In Spain, 45 per cent of those under 25 are out of work. And numerous even poorer and worse-governed countries are now joining the EU.

**'Remain' is bigger risk in every way**

To remain means being powerless to cut mass immigration which keeps wages low and puts catastrophic pressure on our schools, hospitals, roads and housing stock.

In every way, it is a bigger risk.

The Remain campaign, made up of the corporate establishment, arrogant europhiles and foreign banks, have set out to terrify us all about life outside the EU. Their

"Project Fear" strategy predicts mass unemployment, soaring interest rates and inflation, plummeting house prices, even world war.

The Treasury, Bank of England, the IMF and world leaders have all been wheeled out by Downing Street to add their grim warnings.

Nonsense! Years ago the same politicians and economists issued apocalyptic predictions about our fate if we didn't join the euro.

*Thank God we stopped that. The single currency's stranglehold has since ruined the EU's poorer nations and cast millions on the dole.*

We are told we cannot be in the single market without accepting all the rules, free movement of people included. If so, let's leave it and, using our enormous clout as the world's fifth biggest economy, strike great trade deals with the other 85 per cent of the world. And pick and

choose the best migrants from the whole world. If we stay in the EU, as Cameron wants, we will finally give up any chance of controlling our population. Cameron admits it.

Vote Leave, and we will reassert our sovereignty – embracing a future as a self-governing, powerful nation envied by all.

We will re-establish the basic principle that we are governed by politicians we elect or eject every five years, not foreign bureaucrats.

**Our country has glorious history**

The Sun has campaigned relentlessly against the ever-expanding superstate. But the EU cannot reform. Remain has conducted a deceitful campaign. It has been nasty, cynical, personally abusive and beneath the dignity of Britain.

Our country has a glorious history. This is our chance to make Britain even greater, to recapture our democracy, to preserve the values and culture we are rightly proud of.

**A VOTE FOR LEAVE IS A VOTE FOR A BETTER BRITAIN.**

**VOTE TO QUIT EU ON JUNE 23** ~~X~~

13 The Sun, "BeLEAVE in Britain"

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**theguardian**

# Osborne: Brexit will mean rise in mortgage rates

Chancellor fear-mongering says Vote Leave, as official campaign kicks off

**Rupert Neate** Washington  
**Katie Allen**

George Osborne issued a stark warning yesterday that mortgage rates would rise if the UK were to leave the European Union. The chancellor said interest rates, and therefore the cost of home loans, were likely to rise if Britons vote on 23 June to leave the EU. Brexit campaigners accused Osborne of panic-mongering and resorting to intimidating voters.

Asked if he thought the cost of mortgages would increase on a British exit from the 28-nation bloc, Osborne said: "The short answer is yes. I think that is likely, but I'm not in charge of interest rates."

Speaking at the International Monetary Fund spring meetings in Washington, he said minutes from the Bank of England's monetary policy committee, which sets interest rates, contain "repeated reference to the fact that there is an inflation mandate and they will stick to delivering their inflation mandate".

The chancellor's argument is that if there were a vote to quit the EU, sterling would slump and that would push up the cost of imports. That would mean rising prices and the MPC would have to act to prevent inflation taking hold.

He said this could lead to the MPC raising rates from their all-time low of 0.5%, where they have sat since 2009. "You would have rising prices and a Bank of

England with an inflation target committed to respond to that," Osborne said.

The chancellor's warning came on the first day of the official 10-week referendum campaign. Vote Leave, which has been designated as the official lead campaign urging Britain to leave the EU, accused Osborne of fear-mongering and avoiding issues such as EU migration and the money the UK sends to Brussels.

Its chief executive, Matthew Elliott, said: "Less than 24 hours in and the pro-EU camp are already panicking - resorting to doing down the economy and people's mortgages to intimidate the British public into voting their way."

The chancellor's view on interest rates after an out vote is not widely supported. Most City economists believe an interest rate hike in the wake of a Brexit vote is unlikely, given that the Bank would want to shore up confidence. A Reuters poll this week found that 17 of 26 economists thought a vote for Brexit could prompt the Bank to cut interest rates.

Osborne said "every single independent opinion is we would be worse off" if Britain were to leave. He said suggestions from Vote Leave that the UK could keep the economic benefits of being in the EU while leaving were "project fantasy".

He said: "You can make your arguments about whether Britain should leave, but

0.5%

Bank of England's current interest rate, which is at an all-time low



George Osborne was accused of intimidating the British public

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