

It's ludicrous of Remainers to pretend voters didn't know what they were voting for

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[HTTP://WWW.TELEGRAPH.CO.UK/POLITICS/2018/02/21/LUDICROUS-REMAINERS-PRETEND-VOTERS-DIDNT-KNOW-VOTING/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/02/21/ludicrous-remainers-pretend-voters-didnt-know-voting/)

One of the most pernicious claims from the most vocal remainers - such as Messrs Blair, Adonis, Clegg and Cable - is the idea that voters were uninformed when they voted to leave.

More often than not 'uninformed' is scarcely concealed code for 'deceived' and at worst a disdainful assertion of 'stupidity'.

For many on the remain side the physical manifestation of this belief is the indelible image of the Vote Leave battle bus. The problem of course is the selective memory loss that occurs whenever that red bus comes up in conversation.

Indeed, the then government with the backing of the treasury and full government machine, claimed on any medium possible that every family would be '£4,300-a-year' worse off. A claim that taken at absolute face value is approximately £2.2 billion a week based on 27 million families across the country (Somewhat more than £350 million). So, when it comes to campaign straplines both sides deployed significant nuance to put it politely. The difference being that Vote Leave's claim was based on a number that does exist in actual historic records versus speculative economic modelling over a future 15-year period.

This £4,300 claim was covered extensively within the media and critically filtered into the government recommendation to remain campaign that was promoted to every household on social media and controversially via tax payer funded leaflet

But past this outlandish claim this campaign made quite clear what was on the table and importantly had a considerable national footprint.

Explicitly linking EU membership with the single market while the supporting website, created specifically for the digital campaign, went further and highlighted the role of what it termed not just the customs union but "the EU's customs union".

This is significant because newly released information for The Telegraph provides a breakdown of how the government promoted the leaflet on social media. The highly visual social networks of Facebook and YouTube received over £1.3million in digital promotion, while spending on Google ads (£219,947), Instagram (£46,559) and Bing ads (£10,768) totalled nearly £300,000. Interestingly, despite being the favourite platform of the US President Donald Trump, it appears the government spent nothing on Twitter.

This expenditure across multiple platforms represents the largest social media spend a UK government has ever deployed in an attempt to secure a referendum outcome. This is also significant when compared to wider corporate and general election spending on social media.

Although somewhat a dark-art, Sam Jeffers, Co-founder of Facebook political monitoring tool Whotarget.me, suggests it is possible to reach approximately 250,000 voters in swing constituencies with an ad at least 4 times before polling day for £5000. This is dependent on a range of targeting factors, including the organic performance, value of the audience and how they have been targeted.

This estimate reflects figures from the Marketing Cloud Advertising Index, which in 2016 found that an average cost for 1000 UK Facebook impressions was around £4.20. While Facebook's own research, which examined the video campaigns of 13 major UK FMCG brands, highlighted an average campaign cost of £139,783 and an average reach of 4,646,400 households.

Effectively, meaning that the government's pamphlet promotion budget, on Facebook alone, was arguably in the same league as some of the UK's most iconic alcohol, confectionery, personal care and soft drinks brands. And. At the very least, this represented a formidable and commercially viable information campaign.

Taking just Facebook and Instagram spend, the government could have comfortably reached a significant number of the estimated 36million UK Facebook users in 2016. And this is before any potential targeting of swing voters and those with a propensity to Vote Remain that may have occurred. Not to mention the advantageous effect of combining digital spend with the mail campaign and the endless reinforced TV messaging of project fear.

Each digital ad hammered home the key messages about leaving the single market and the customs union and the explicit confirmation that “The Government will implement what you decide”.



The Government's EU referendum leaflet CREDIT: PAUL GROVER

Even by general political standards this one leaflet received truly staggering levels of promotion. With digital spend during the entire 2015 election by comparison reaching £1.6m, of which £1.3m was spent on Facebook. In other words, the digital promotion of just one leaflet before the actual referendum campaign, received more than the entire 2015 General Election digital spend and is likely to represent over half of the 2017 spend of the major parties (Reports have suggested that Conservative and Labour spending for the 2017 election will be around £3.2 million).

At the time there was understandable outrage that the taxpayer was footing the bill for the physical leaflet but in reality, this was just the most overt element of the government recommendation to remain strategy. The digital campaign was far more pervasive and continuous.

Voters were certainly not unaware of the supposedly dire consequences of leaving the EU. It was also clear that a vote to leave also meant leaving the Single Market and the Customs Union. These messages were posted to every home and advertised on every major social network, interrupting news feeds and cat videos across the country for weeks before purdah and the campaign proper.

On the morning of the 24th June 2016, over 17.4 million people had voted to leave in spite of the campaign being heavily weighted in favour of the status quo and a remain digital ad spend, outside of the official campaigns, that would make many a marketing manager envious.

Given the publicity blitz voters had from the Remain side, it's ludicrous to suggest they didn't know about the alleged costs of voting for Brexit, those that make this case are treating voters for fools and in their duplicity, are undermining the very basis of democracy.

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