



THE SUN: CONTEXTS

Background Context
 The Sun is a British tabloid daily newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. Originally published six days a week until the Sun on Sunday started in Feb 12, replacing News of the World. Average daily circulation 1.6m copies of print edition and a daily readership of around 4.1 million. The Sun has the largest circulation of any daily print newspaper in UK. The Sun on Sunday is the UK's biggest selling Sunday newspaper. 18th December is International Migrants Day, where the UN encourages the world to acknowledge the importance of immigrants. Just days before this front page, a YouGov Poll revealed that 42% of their responders said immigration was the key area where Britain needed to win back power from Brussels (EU). Britain ultimately voted to leave the EU on June 23rd 2016 – Brexit – and it is believed that many people voted this way due to their feelings about immigration.

Historical & Cultural Context
 A broadsheet in 1964, became tabloid in 1969 after being purchased by NewsCorp. Sex was an important feature of selling the paper; the first topless page 3 model appeared in November 1970, soon becoming a regular feature- an area of contention for some people. The Sun has always been considered controversial - due to its sensational news and complete fabrication for the sake of a story. The most notable being the coverage of the Hillsborough Football Stadium disaster in Sheffield on 15th April 1989. 96 people died and the paper's headline, "The Truth", alleged fans pickpocketed victims, urinated on emergency services and assaulted a policeman who was administering the kiss of life to a victim. The story was from anonymous sources, later proved to be false and The Sun apologised. The front page caused outrage in Liverpool where it was soon titled "The Scum" and a significant proportion of the city's population still boycott the paper today with many shops even refusing to stock it.

Key Terms and conventions

Layout, Use of cover photographs/images, House style, Mastheads, Headline, Anchor, Direct address, Command, Threat, Xenophobic, EU, Left third, Article, Close up, Birds Eye View, Red tape, Dominant image, St George's Cross, Tabloid, Right wing, Patriotic

Historial & Political Contexts

The Sun nominally supported the Labour party but has moved back and forth between Labour and the Conservatives, depending on party leadership. The paper has always been very vocal in telling its readers how they should vote. Today, The Sun is described as having political allegiance to the Conservative party and does not support the EU, so it is not surprising that the language of this main articles seeks to apportion blame to the EU, suggesting they are the reason for such high levels of immigration. It might be helpful then to compare this cover with another from the left-wing press, such as The Guardian which often provides a more supportive view of migrants.

LEFT wing Vs RIGHT wing

Left wing is generally a more liberal and forward-moving ideology in the UK, Labour are leaning left from centre.
Right wing is more conservative and generally traditional. In the UK, Conservatives are leaning right from centre.

MEDIA LANGUAGE: How the NEWSPAPER communicates with the audience about the following:

Technical codes

1. Birds Eye View shot of the EU including the UK - this anchors the headline about immigration from the EU and makes the readers understand what the article is about.
2. Close up shot of the Prime Minister, looking tired and stressed. This shot will have been selected from numerous images, probably none of which have been taken for this article, to show how difficult a job he has trying to balance the views of the country with the responsibilities he has as a member of the EU.
3. The fact the newspaper has chosen to name only two other countries on the map, could suggest where The Sun imagines the main 'threat'

Symbolic codes

1. Dominant image includes red tape separating the UK from the rest of Europe. The red tape with white strip reminds us of the St George Cross, connoting patriotism, nationalism and all things English. 'Red tape' = 'cutting the EU red tape' relating to the restrictions- in this case restrictions the UK has as part of the EU.
2. Facial expression of the PM- stressed and tired- showing how difficult he is finding his role balancing the British people's opinions and his membership of the EU.
3. House style/colour palette- conventional for tabloid but also fits the red and white colour of the English flag, connoting patriotism.

Written Codes

1. Main headline, directed at the Prime Minister, is informal; using commands and "or else!" - inappropriate and disrespectful to the leader, but arguably perfect for the intended audience who may feel they need to shout to be heard.
2. "The Sun says..." as if The Sun has weighting when it comes to the decisions the Prime Minister makes.
3. Language in article is emotive, describing immigration as "the flood", as something unwanted and destructive.
4. "OR ELSE!" - an ultimatum is an inappropriate way to address the head of state. If he isn't able to get power back from the EU to stop immigration, the readers will likely vote out of the EU but with no evidence and by including this, The Sun may be planting the seed for how readers should vote.
5. Romania & Bulgaria: choosing to name only two countries suggests where the main 'threat' is coming from.
6. Direct address, "you tell him" and the collective term, "The British people" ensures that the readers feel a part of this so-called demand on the PM and therefore also assume this viewpoint on immigration.
7. Masthead is in block, capitalised text and uses the colours red and white- conventional of tabloids – journalism that often relies on sensationalism, celebrities and gossip.
8. Advert for money off at Aldi supermarket, in keeping with the demographic of the target audience who are mainly lower middle class and below.

REPRESENTATION of SOCIAL GROUPS

Representation of MIGRANTS

1. The cover has been produced based on a YouGov poll where 42% of the responders said they thought Britain should be able to limit immigration from the EU, and also on their own Sun poll – the results of which are not reported on this cover. The Sun's cover interprets this information as all of its readers want a blanket ban on immigration, which is not wholly accurate and so some people have argued that this front cover is xenophobic.

Representation of the LEADER

1. The cover's informal and inappropriate direct address to the leader, David Cameron, suggests that he is struggling under the pressure of the British people and represents him as a poor leader.
2. The selection of the close up image of the leader, looking tired and stressed reinforces this.

CONSIDER TARGET AUDIENCE

- Middle social classes, most of whom haven't attended higher education.
 - Two thirds of its readers are over 35 years old
 - 54% are male and its biggest audience share comes from the C2DE demographic.
 - Average reading age of the UK population is 9 years old. The Sun has a reading age of 8 years. Use of words in bold, lots of visuals and smaller chunks of text means they are making their product accessible to everyone and especially appealing to members of our society who have weaker literacy skills.
 - Also, this makes it easier to read at speed and to skim and scan the paper to find specific articles that interest you. This could help explain why The Sun is "Britain's most popular paper" as stated by its tagline, as it is an easy read.
2. The way in which The Sun has constructed this immigration narrative serves to reinforce the negative stereotype of migrants as people to be feared, potential terrorists, benefit scroungers and criminals.
 3. The text of the main article is carefully constructed to position the audience into wholly accepting the newspaper's viewpoint, analysis and opinion.
 4. The use of direct address, "you tell him" and the collective term, "The British people" ensures that the readers feel a part of this so-called demand on the PM and therefore also assume this viewpoint on immigration.
 5. The issue of immigration is complex and often divides people, some considering the UK to be at capacity and unable to accept more, some seeing the benefits that immigrants bring to society.
 6. However, the selection of images and corresponding text means that readers are positioned to agree that immigration is a bad thing and needs to be stopped.

ACTIVE VS PASSIVE audiences

Historically, readers of print newspapers were considered to be passive (i.e. they read what was in front of them and believed it), especially as there is an expectation that what is shared in the news genre is true. However, today's audiences are much more active and understand how tabloids often don't report full facts. This potentially changes the way they interpret the information they are given.

KEY MESSAGES

1. IMMIGRATION is a problem for the UK.
2. Reinforces negative stereotypes of immigrants.
3. British people want immigration to stop

CONSIDER INDUSTRY

FUNDING
 Newspapers earn revenue from ads- the purpose is mainly for profit. £1 in every £7 spent on groceries is spent by a Sun reader making it a very attractive advertising vehicle. Readership continue to drop and advertisers will leave if figures drop too low. Newspapers need audiences to sell copies- the dominant image and the main article is to sell papers. In 2016 The Sun lost more than £250m including £50m for legal costs/pay-offs for phone-hacking scandal (previously cost News Corp. £366m).

TECHNOLOGY AND CONVERGENCE

August 2013, The Sun launched Sun+, a subscription service digital entertainment package. Subscribers paid £2 per week to access all of The Sun's regular content AND exclusive access to Premier League clips, a variety of digital rewards and a lottery. Sun+ had 117k subscribers who they could engage with on a more personal level due to the brand loyalty- just one of the ways The Sun adapted to people's reading habits, with people now having little time to spare and increasingly 'reading on the go'. However, in November 2015, the paper had to remove the paywall and offer most of its web content for free in order to compete with major rivals such as The Mail Online. Since removal of the paywall, it now has around 1 million browsers per day.