

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS ON FEMI FANI-KAYODE'S VISUAL GENRE OF CARTOONS AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

- Mainasara Yakubu Kurfi, PhD; Lawal Umar Maradun & Aondover Eric Msugter

#### **Introduction**

Cartoon is a journalistic genre that is presented in simple, sort and catchy formats, which appeal to human sense and consequently allows for quick reception of the messages being communicated. Adejuwon & Alimi in Bello (2022) argued that cartoons serve as medium through which people are informed, educated, and entertained by presenting societal happenings in a hilarious manner. According to Bello, editorial cartoons are designed to satirise current political issues, and offer subtle criticism cleverly coated with humour and satire. Cartoons amuse, yet they are veritable means of exposing social ills and strategic way of conveying messages of deep meaning magnitude.

Given the importance of cartooning, it has been described as one of the most significant means of propagating, and promoting cultural heritage in Nigeria. Newspaper cartoons throughout Nigerian history reveal that they have served as unique windows useful in understanding local and national politics. Using imagery, metaphor, symbolism and other rhetorical devices, a cartoonist defines political situations, and attempts to interpret them visually in a way that is both amusing, and thought-provoking. For instance, it has been documented that the exploits of Akinola Lasekan with his editorial cartoons in the *West African Pilot* in the 1940s and 1950s reflected colonial life, and also depicted the struggle for nationhood, which later culminated in the Nigeria's independence in 1960 (Onyike, Okoye & Labo, 2022). Therefore, political cartoons play a significant role in virtually every society. The relevance of this genre of visual commentary has been the subject of considerable scholarly exertion in recent times. On the historical development of cartooning in Africa, scholars like Abdulwahid (2022) and Jimoh in Ndago, Irikidzayi & Makombe (2022) agreed that the emergence of this genre has been influenced by a need to have an alternative platform like editorial cartoons in expressing political opinion in the face of government or regime clampdown on opposition. Hence, Dweich & Al-Ghabra (2022) in relation to the level of iconicity in their studies discussed the stylistic characteristics of the language of cartoons in some Nigerian newspapers.

Political cartoons, according to Jimoh in Onyike, Okoye & Labo (2022) are primary ingredients in political communication, as they foster political reflection, which can serve as a basis for social action. They are viable means of criticising, reflecting and supporting political views through satire and wit. In this perspective, Akpabio (2021) gave a brief history of Nigerian cartoons and traced it to Akinola Lasekan, as most previous studies on Nigerian cartooning. Ola, cited in Mowafy (2022) argued that these visual forms are cultural materials that cannot be denied attention as they are culturally constructed.

Within this context, this study focuses on the political cartoons of Femi Fani-Kayode's visual genre, which is regarded as one of the most expressive, controversial and serious among the forms of cartooning. Political cartoons are visual images, with or without captions that comment on political occurrences in the society which are usually published on the pages of newspapers or on the social media platforms. Cartoons go alongside satirical caricature and comic art and have line as their principal element. They are forms of visual satire in mass media intended to entertain and to educate the audience on sociopolitical issues. However, in recent times, political cartoons need not to be published in newspapers or magazine, as there are online platforms through which cartoonists disseminate their expressions. Cartoonists, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be likened to traditional palace jesters in most African societies because their roles in lampooning the excesses of influential people in subtle and humorous ways.

Apparently, cartoons are significant elements of media communication. Over the years, both print and electronic media have presented the public with visualised versions of comments. Indeed, the mass media perform major roles in defining social issues as their representations constitute ways of knowing, articulating and interpreting different facets of the society, and thus ways of exerting knowledge and power in the society (Jimoh in Ho, Proglor & Vuong, 2021). The ability of political cartoons to express complex issues in a single graphic metaphor, as well as having access to a variety of literate and illiterate audiences, suggests that they constitute a compelling political force.

Scholars like Ho, Proglor & Vuong (2021) have lamented the lack of serious attention to the study of political cartoon. Corroborating, Oparaugo (2021) describes the political cartoons as a neglected genre of political communication. The reason for this seeming lack of documentation, Oparaugo posits that is the puzzling issue of whether to consider this genre as a work of art or an expression of humour. To consider political cartoon as expressions of humour, according to Akpabio (2021) is to abuse this type of cartoon as 'political symbols,' stating that the best way to study them is through the deconstruction of those symbols. Thus, this paper examines the recent Femi Fani-Kayode's cartoons on both print and electronic media, which is one of the most expressive cartoons in contemporary Nigerian cartoonists as the multimedia approach has generated a wider audience for his cartoons.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Scholars have attempted to contextualised cartoons and political communication in Nigerian context. As Jimoh in Nsungu (2021) observed that on 7 January 2015, France was traumatised when two brothers, Said and Cberif Kouacbi, forced their way into the office of the satirical French weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris and opened fire on more than twenty-two staff members. They killed eleven people and injured eleven others. Among those who were murdered in cold blood were five of France's best known satirical cartoonists. The attackers claimed to belong to the Islamist terrorist group Al Qaeda in Yemen. The principal motive, based on the terrorists' utterances, as the attack was being carried out, was to shut down a media organisation that had attracted attention for its controversial satirical depictions of the holy Prophet Muhammad.

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The Charlie Hebdo attack was a major disaster since the 2005 Prophet Muhammad cartoon controversy in Denmark that sparked violent protests across the world. In September 2005, the Danish newspaper Jyllands Posten had published twelve cartoons of the holy Prophet Muhammad in an attempt, according to the editor, to test the level of religious tolerance in Denmark. These visual expressions were laden with imageries, which, according to Islamic belief, are anti-Islam. The Holy Quran forbids the depiction of the holy Prophet in any visual form whatsoever. Some Muslims offended by these cartoons embarked on sometimes violent demonstrations and riots across the continent. Over two hundred people died globally as a result of the cartoon publication (Nsungu, 2021). These occurrences, among others, illuminate the significance of cartoons, which are considered by many as a “less serious” mode of artistic expression of humour, despite being a strong visual form and commentary on political events; it can no longer be denied scholarly attention.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Analyse contextual background of the iconographic of Femi Fani-Kayode’s visual genre in Nigeria.
2. Study the formal description of the iconographic of Femi Fani-Kayode’s visual genre in Nigeria.
3. Examine the iconographic of Femi Fani-Kayode’s visual genre in Nigeria.

#### **Literature Review**

A cartoon is a two dimensional, non-realistic or stylised drawing or painting intended for satire, caricature or humour. Cartoons are an amalgam of images (the symbols) and captions (the written word) that are simplified into a visual form and presented in an easily accessible medium of mass communication, such as newspaper, magazine, web and book. Types of cartoons include gag cartoons, comic strips, animated cartoons and political cartoon or editorial cartoons (Ifechelobi & Ilodinso, 2021). Msughter (2020) examines internet memes as a unique form of narratives to help avert the wide spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria. The study captures and highlights the usage of photographic memes on COVID-19. The study employs semiotic and qualitative content analysis methods. The study found that Internet memes on COVID-19 explore issues that contain visual metaphors aimed at establishing what Nigerians are passing through as well as stimulating government participation. Again, social media usage in connection with the pandemic in Nigeria is by creating, uploading, and sharing of internet memes on COVID-19. It was established that internet memes served as an avenue for direct communication, which apparently contributes to creating awareness on COVID-19 to the general public.

Kurfi & Msughter (2021) analysed the contextual background of internet memes of men dance competition in Benue State. They study formal description of the internet memes of men dance competition and examine iconographic of the internet memes of men dance competition in the state. The study espouses on the Cultural Populism Theory and Visual Rhetoric Theory. The study adopts Semiotic Analysis (SA) and Text and Textual Analysis (TT). Purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of the social media

and pictures for analysis. The findings showed that visual imageries are used symbolically on social media to show the weakness of men in dance competition in Benue State. The findings of the study also revealed that the role of men in cultural promotion on the Tiv popular culture in the state is significantly high. The study concludes that men in the state dance very well and have a unique form of promoting Tiv popular culture.

Thus, one major challenge in this study is the paucity of literature compared to other areas of research in political communication and journalism. However, empirical studies on the role of cartoon in developing country like Nigeria, and the usage of language have been done using in-depth interview, survey and content analysis. A study carried out by Bello & Aleshinloye in Akande (2021) holds that cartoonists could be regarded as significant contributors to the development of Nigerian media, particularly the newspapers. The study found that about two third of the readers identified political cartoons as one of their reasons for purchasing newspapers. Similarly, Ifechelobi & Nwachukwu (2021) maintain that cartoons help to set the tone of public discussions on issues of national concern.

Research by Bello (2022) has also identified political cartoons as a potent multimodal genre comprising linguistic and nonlinguistic devices to convey meaningful messages. The authors argue that the Nigerian political cartoons adopt a specific pattern of depicting substantive issues reflecting current sociopolitical issues in the Nigerian context. These substantive issues constitute 80% of the total cartoons sampled. Additionally, Mowafy (2022) conducted another study on the political cartoons and found that considering the increase in the media, political cartoons constitute a vital social discourse that mediates media and society, thereby contributing to political communication, social debate and commentary.

Sani in Abdulwahid (2022) observed that visual metaphor is a powerful rhetoric, which can be creatively utilised to provide a better means of communicating important messages because it strongly appeals to the mind of the readers more precisely and succinctly than verbal expressions. Dweich & Al-Ghabra (2022) in their study found that the images of corruption, official irresponsibility, political failure and brutality are dominantly presented in that order. It is also clear in the literature that in terms of portrayal of corruption, the antiestablishment posture of the cartoons is directed towards those who were formerly in government and the allied institutions. Dweich & Al-Ghabra (2022) concluded that the newspaper cartoons have used the instrument of satire to project what they perceived to be the dominant ills of the society. Oparaugo (2021) in a study that explored the ability of readers to decode editorial cartoons in national dailies concluded that there is no doubt that editorial cartoons have more to offer than entertaining readers. Hence, editorial cartoons are meant to instigate a reflection on what is happening in a society.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided on the theoretical lens of visual rhetoric theory, which is an art of effective communication through images, typography and texts. Visual rhetoric encompasses the skill of visual literacy and the ability to analyse images for their form and meaning. Drawing from the theoretical lens of rhetorical analysis, visual rhetoric examines the structure of an image and the consequent persuasive effects on an audience. Visual rhetoric implicates the use of images. Using images is sacrosanct to visual

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rhetoric because these visuals or images help in forming the case or arguing the point that the writer formulates. Similarly, visual rhetoric encompasses how people arrange segments of visual text on both print and electronic media. Visual rhetoric also involves the selection of different fonts, contrastive colors, and graphs, among other elements, to shape visual rhetoric text. One of the ideas one can apply, when analysing a visual text is to look for its significant meaning.

In the application of visual rhetoric, scholars like Msughter (2020) and Oparaugo (2021) are of the view that the meaning should be deeper than the literal sense that a visual text holds. In this perspective, there is a need to dissect a visual text to understand the meaning behind the image or text. Analysing a text that includes a photo, painting or even cartoon of the bold eagle with additional written words, would bring to minds the conceptions of strength and freedom, rather than merely a conception of a bird. This, including an understanding of the iconographic creative and rhetorical choices made with coloring, shaping and object placement. Visual rhetoric view images as sensory expressions and contextual meaning, as opposed to purely aesthetic consideration. Visual rhetoric has been approached and applied in a variety of academic fields including art, history, linguistics, semiotics, iconographic, cultural studies, business and technical communication, speech communication, and classical rhetoric. Visual rhetoric seeks to develop rhetorical theory in a way that is more comprehensive and inclusive about images and their interpretations. Within this context, there is a nexus between the theory and the study as people often used print and electronic media platforms to engage in political communication to analysed Femi Fani-Kayode's visual genre in Nigeria.

### **Method and Materials**

The method is based on qualitative, descriptive and textual analysis. It relies on primary and secondary data sources. Cartoon images connote multiple interpretations. Thus, the analysis of cartoons is accomplished by iconographic analysis within the visual and social semiotic theoretical frameworks. Iconographic analysis is an interpretation of the content of images: the subjects depicted the particular compositions and details used, including other elements that are distinct from artistic style (Jimoh, cited in Oparaugo, 2021). The population of the study comprises cartoons of Femi Fani-Kayode's visual genre in Nigeria published in 2021. These cartoons were sourced from both print and electronic media platforms. Eight cartoons were analysed for this study, however, four are presented in this report, for depth qualitative analysis.

Purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of the cartoons that were analysed, with the criteria for selection being sociopolitical themes, cartoons embedded with visual imageries, less textual elements, and single panel cartoons. These criteria are dictated by the objectives and analytical orientations of the study. Secondary data for the study comprise literary materials underpinning the focus of the study. The analysis of data is inductive and inferences are drawn from an in-depth observation of the textual and visual elements embedded in cartoon representations within their contexts of production. The cartoons are analysed under the following headings: contextual background, formal description and iconographic analysis. Contextual background discusses the factors that led to the production of the cartoon. Formal description and

iconographic analysis refers to the formal elements and the symbolic context of imageries within the sociopolitical context of production respectively. Therefore, the following parametres were used to examine the cartoons as follows:

- a. **Contextual Background:** It discusses the factors that led to the production of pictures or cartoons of Femi Fani-Kayode’s visual genre in Nigeria.
- b. **Formal Description:** They are formal elements and the symbolic context of imageries within the sociopolitical pictures or cartoons in the context of Femi Fani-Kayode’s visual genre in Nigeria.
- c. **Iconographic Analysis:** It is a method of image analysis that studies the identification, description and interpretation of the content of images; depicted in the compositions and other elements that are distinct from artistic style of Femi Fani-Kayode’s visual genre in Nigeria.

## Findings and Discussion



**Source: Facebook, 2021**

### Context Background

Former Aviation Minister, Femi Fani-Kayode (FFK) defected to All Progressives Congress (APC). FFK dumped the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the ruling APC after years of criticising the party. The news of his defection went viral after Femi Adesina, the spokesperson to President Muhammadu Buhari, shared pictures of the ex-minister as he was welcomed to the party at the Presidential Villa. His defection came after months of speculations and denials. Based on some of the criticism from the masses, FFK said he was

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proud of his decision to dump the PDP for the APC. “I am proud to be here, it does not matter what people say or think,” apparently conscious of what critics would say. “Let’s focus on building our country, bridges to ensure that we do not turn on one another as a people and end up having a civil war” (*Premium Times*, 2021).

#### **Formal Description**

The cartoon is linear and rendered in different colours with the illusion of depth analysis of shading technique. The plot is set within an imagery of a chameleon, which is in the habit of quick colour changing abilities. The image depicts a critic linking of defection to a chameleon, switching from one party to another. The textual elements of the cartoon indicate the actions of chameleon, equating how unstable one can be in terms of political participation. In the symbolic context of imageries within the sociopolitical context of production, chameleon is always changing colours, so FFK can change at any time, in the pursuit of power. The formal description also shows that in political context, a politician is dynamic and not static to a particular political party.

#### **Iconographic Analysis**

With the use of metaphoric allusion, the cartoon constructs the realities of incessant political outage in the country. FFK is presented as a mythological icon on the symbol of authority, denoting inconsistency in political party (PDP to APC). The cartoon is satirically linked with the changing nature of chameleon from one colour to another. By extension, the iconology in its style reflects how the personified icon can move in cycle to political parties in spite of criticism. Corroborating, Sani in Oparaugo (2021) maintains that cartoons help to set the tone of public discussions on issues of national concern. Similarly, Sani & Abdullah (2012) also identified political cartoons as a potent multimodal genre comprising linguistic and nonlinguistic devices to convey meaningful messages.



**Source: *The Punch*, 2021**

### **Context Background**

Femi Fani-Kayode (FFK) on Thursday returned to the All Progressives Congress. This comes barely two years after he described the party as darkness, which he will never associate with (*The Punch*, 2021). It could be recalled that on the 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2019 FFK said “I am committed to opposing the APC and those that are in their ranks for the rest of my natural life and I will NEVER join them no matter what! They are nothing but darkness whilst I stand for the light of God and truth; there can be No fellowship between light and darkness.” He accused the President, Major General Buhari Muhammadu led regime of deceiving Nigerians with anti-corruption war. FFK said he will rather die than join a filthy, rat-infested sinking ship like the Almajiri Peoples’ Congress (APC). However, when he met Buhari, whom he had clamoured for his impeachment two years ago, FFK said he was just doing the right thing (*The Punch*, 2021).

### **Formal Description**

The composition of the cartoon portrays a scene by the cartoonist, which depicts FFK as a fish and Buhari as a fisherman. The cartoon is in a stationary form and a rock beside the water with President Buhari on it. The President positioned himself on the rock in a dramatic action of a fisherman. In a stylistic way, Buhari holds the fishing rods attached with the hook, line and sinker with fishing bait that entice the fish. The formal description is that of allusion presented in a character in the cartoon, which created a mental picture of Faniwater. Bello (2022) maintained that the Nigerian political cartoons adopt a specific pattern of depicting substantive issues reflecting current sociopolitical issues in the Nigerian context.

### **Iconographic Analysis**

Drawing from sociopolitical mythical allusions, it is clear that whatever case, everyone has a price and every fish has what attracts it to the hook. The iconography portrays that Buhari laid the hook and fish bait for FFK and eventually caught him. In a connotative direction of the iconology, it could mean that Buhari knew what FFK wanted and he understood Nigerian politics absolutely. The symbolic logic shows that in Nigeria, if you make noise about something, it draws people’s attention to you. In Nigerian political context, attacking opponents is a sign of creating visual presence in the public domain. Akpabio (2021) observed that visual metaphor is a powerful rhetoric, which can be creatively utilised to provide a better means of communicating important messages because it strongly appeals to the mind of the readers more precisely and succinctly than verbal expressions.





**Source:** *The Punch*, 2021

### **Contextual Background**

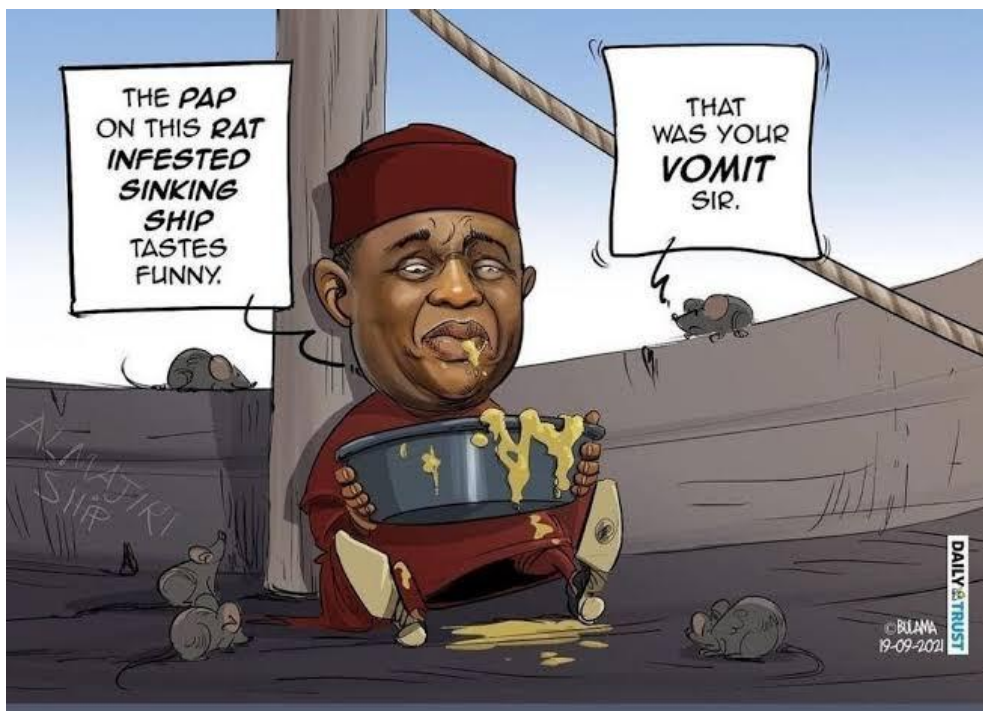
*The Punch* newspaper has a front banner headline titled: Fani-Kayode is my Boy, give him Food, he will Praise and Sing for You-Obasanjo Blows Hot on FFK. The banner headline was accompanied with a cartoon in the front page of the paper. The former Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo has revealed all politicians need to do for FFK to sing their praises to high heavens. The former Aviation Minister has jumped political camp from the ruling All Progressives Congress to the People's Democratic Party. According to Obasanjo, "FFK is my boy, give him food, he will praise you and sing for you" (*The Punch*, 2021, p. 1). Thus, Dweich & Al-Ghabra (2022) hold that cartoonists could be regarded as significant contributors to the development of Nigerian media, particularly the newspapers. The study found that about two third of the readers identified political cartoons as one of their reasons for purchasing newspapers.

### **Formal Description**

The cartoon is a product of composition within Nigerian context, considering its depiction of the sociopolitical ambiance of FFK. The imagery shows that a man's character is displayed by his pronouncements when comfortable and given enough food, the vibes from his songs continues. Based on the formal description of the cartoon, the plot for FFK to defect to the APC had long been on the cards, but had been resisted by critical factors in the party, and the presidency were unwilling to provide the desired food now provides the food, and the poetic lyrics of the former changed to the later.

### **Iconographic Analysis**

Going by the preceding cartoon as a template, all these elements from reality are metaphorically employed to suggest that politics in Nigeria is a game of benefit or simply put a musical box. As such, these visual images are used symbolically on governmental conspiracies surrounding the game theory about the strategic interaction among rational decision makers on the basis of profit gained. In the cartoon, FFK is seated before a mortar with a plate of food on top. FFK's two hands supported the plate of food with a balanced motion and excitement written all over his face. The attire in the iconography depicts a native style of Nigerian ornamentation Onyike, Okoye & Labo (2022) concluded that the newspaper cartoons have used the instrument of satire to project what they perceived to be the dominant ills of the society.



**Source:** *Daily Trust*, 2021

### **Contextual Background**

According Sani & Abdullah in Bello (2022) identified political cartoons as a potent multimodal genre comprising linguistic and nonlinguistic devices to convey meaningful messages. The authors argue that the Nigerian political cartoons adopt a specific pattern of depicting substantive issues reflecting current sociopolitical issues in the Nigerian context. Bello (2022) observed that visual metaphor is a powerful rhetoric, which can be creatively utilised to provide a better means of communicating important messages because it strongly appeals to the mind of the readers more precisely and succinctly than verbal expressions. Within this context, FFK cartoon was created to presents in a satiric manner to paint a mental picture in the mind of people to depict a scene of him feeding from the past vomit he committed. This underscores the theoretical postulations of Visual Rhetoric,

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which involves the selection of different fonts, contrastive colors and graphs, among other elements, to shape visual rhetoric text.

#### **Formal Description**

In the composition, FFK was well decorated with a typical attire of an African man, a round native cap with his two hands supported a rubber plate, which contained pap that rat infested sink that tastes funny. The setting of the cartoon has a number of rats from the background quizzed at him, which symbolised the formal description of the intended rat infested sink in the pap. The caricature grotesque the metaphorical and polemical imitation of someone taking back what he produced as captured in the literal allusion that conveyed the cartoon. As FFK once said “I will rather die than join a filthy, rat-infested sinking ship like the Almajiri Peoples’ Congress (APC).”

#### **Iconographic Analysis**

Based on the iconographic logic, it is pertinent to note that in this visually stimulating cartoon, of the first visual imageries of FFK as depicted here was illustrated to lunch and exacerbate the comic nature of the vomit rather than relief. The cartoon unarguably summaries disappointment as seen on the expressions captured on the face. By drawing from mythical and literal allegory, it depicts the saying “what goes around will actually come around.” Akande (2021) argued that these visual forms are cultural materials that cannot be denied attention as they are culturally constructed. Ndago, Irikidzayi & Makombe (2022) concluded that considering the increase in the media, political cartoons constitute a vital social discourse that mediates media and society, thereby contributing to political communication, social debate and commentary.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the study discovered that political cartoons in the Nigerian newspapers are such a strategic editorial piece, which cartoonists use to uncover social ills and satirise them for public enlightenment. Through cartooning in print and electronic media, the visual rhetoric theory, which is an art of effective communication through images typography and texts, can be performed effectively while the media still create humour to amuse the audience. The researchers concluded that because of the strategic importance of cartoons in both print and electronic media, the role it performs in advancing the cause of societal reformation and development and the entertainment element of cartoons, the media will continue to publish cartoon to achieve the overall goal of their existence. Therefore, political cartoons are indispensable features of editorial pages and they influence public opinion and serve as a rhetorical object in lampooning the excesses of the political class. Cartoons comprise textual elements and visual imageries that are significant in stimulating the interest of readers, both in descriptive and analytical communication.

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