

The Concept of Editorial Cartoons: Mingo's Artworks in the Newspapers in Sabah, Malaysia

Imelda Ann Achin¹, Addley Bromeo Bianus² & Zairul Anwar Md Dawam³

Academy of Arts and Technology Creative

University Malaysia Sabah

Jalan UMS, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

¹imelda_ann@ums.edu.my, ²addley@ums.edu.my, ³zanuar@ums.edu.my

Abstract

Cartoons in the form of comments and satire, also known as editorial cartoons, have become visual article headline or titles on the pages of newspapers and magazines. However, the function and role of cartoons especially those broadcast in the Sabah print media, are less discussed due to confusion about the concept of editorial cartoons, which have specific characteristics and functions.

Therefore, this research aims to define the concept of cartoons and identify socio-political issues in Sabah, that are raised through George Chin's editorial cartoons or synonymous with the name 'Mingo': one of the pioneer cartoonists in Sabah.

Editorial cartoon ideas are explained using the visual metaphor theory approach. The Sabah Archive Collection provides information about the cartoon. The focus of this study is to analyze editorial cartoons published between 1966 and 1967.

This paper concludes that the notion of editorial cartoons has a symbolic purpose to prepare or criticize social and political issues as practiced by Mingo through his cartoons. The processing of formalistic aspects, iconography, iconography, animal images, objects and situations, the main characteristics of a character, verbal language aspects in editorial cartoons are able to move an issue so that they are able to create a new situation. The picture of society's views and the situation that happened at that time can be described by just drawing editorial cartoons. Cartoonists should be smart in using concepts or images that are appropriate to the issue in order to easily convey or express an issue. Through the description, it turns out that Mingo uses simple but compact symbolism to reflect and express social and political issues in Sabah, Malaysia. Indirectly, his editorial cartoons also contribute to the development of social and political awareness in Sabah.

Keywords: Concept, editorial cartoons, Visual Metaphor, symbolic function, Mingo.

Introduction

Artwork in the form of satire or criticism began to develop as a medium of political criticism in Sabah since the development of printing art in the late 50s. With the growing use of newspaper media to disseminate information and political views, editorial cartoons also grew as critical media in the print media. Its form is visual and easy to understand quickly, causing editorial cartoons to be readily accepted by the public compared to written texts that need to be read first to understand the meaning of the (linear) writing. Thus, cartoons are widely used in

the media, not only as entertainment but also as a visual commentary on issues and events that occur in society. Cartoons in the form of comments and satire, also known as editorial cartoons, until today have become visual article headline or titles on the pages of newspapers and magazines.

However, the function and role of cartoons, especially those broadcast in the Sabah print media, are less discussed due to confusion about the concept of editorial cartoons, which have specific characteristics and functions.

George Chin or well known as Mingo, one of the Sabah's cartoonist has produced editorial cartoons that feature current issues in Sabah. He tries to cover social and political issues in Sabah through the channel of his editorial cartoons. The results of his work can communicate by displaying current issues that are worked on in the form of symbolism. Through Mingo's editorial cartoons, this study will describe the concept of editorial cartoons that have the characteristics and function of criticism or depiction in the current issue.

This study aims to describe the concept of editorial cartoons and analyze the function of editorial cartoons in discussing current issues through Mingo's cartoons. Through this study, the editorial concept and function of the role of cartoons in local newspapers in Sabah can be identified.

Significance of the Study

Documentation of Mingo's editorial cartoons is important as a guide for local cartoonists who are new to the field of editorial cartoons. New cartoonists can better understand and recognize the function and role of editorial cartoons through Mingo's work. This study is also expected to contribute to the public understanding of the use of symbolism in disguising or knowing the topics or issues presented in editorial cartoons produced by a cartoonist. In addition, it will describe the concept of editorial cartoons with the characteristics and functions of criticism or depiction of current issues through Mingo's editorial cartoons.

The lack of documentation about editorial cartoons in Sabah should not be taken for granted. The editorial cartoon materials of the Sabah State Archives and Sabah Museum collections that have not been registered should not be left to be kept for viewing purposes only. Editorial cartoons can be a helpful document since this study will help future generations recognize editorial cartoons and subsequently not abuse the medium of editorial cartoons for personal gain.

Literature Review

Artwork in the form of satire or criticism began to develop as a medium of political criticism since the development of printing in Europe during the Renaissance. In the 11th century, Martin Luther's reformation movement criticized the Catholic Church through the distribution of pamphlets printed using woodblocks (Lucie-Smith, 1981: 34; Sibarani, 2010: 10). With that success, it shows the strength of the print media that is able to spread views widely (Wagiono, 1982: 9). With the development of print technology in Europe, print media such as newspapers were born which became the basis for the production of satirical drawing prints known as editorial cartoons.

The rapid development of cartoons as a new medium of political satire is due to the use of movable type printing presses in the 15th century which later gave birth to newspaper media in the 17th century (Horn, 1980: 25). The change in society's views in the post-Renaissance period towards a new social revolution that is more liberal led to the birth of newspapers as a medium to convey sociopolitical aspirations. In the 17th century, newspapers only functioned as news carriers. But by the 18th century, newspapers had spread widely on a regular and regular basis. Its function is not only as a conveyer of information, but also as a media conveying views by the community. In that situation, editorial cartoons became a meaningful medium in society. Figures such as James Gilray (English, 1757-1815), Honore Daumiere (French, 1808-1874) and Thomas Nast (American, 1840-1902) were cartoonists who succeeded in shaping the views society through their cartoons (Hoff, 1976: 38).

The development of the use of newspaper media as a disseminator of information and

political views has caused editorial cartoons to also grow as critical media in the print media. Its form is visual and easy to understand quickly, causing editorial cartoons to be easily accepted by the community. Thus, cartoons are widely used in the media, not only as entertainment but also as a visual comment on issues and events that occur in society. Cartoons in the form of comments and satire, also known as editorial cartoons, which until today have become visual article titles on the pages of newspapers and magazines.

A research related to editorial cartoons in Malaysia was done by Mulyadi Mahamood (2004:15). Through his research, the development of editorial cartoons in Malaysia was identified as developing in the 1930s. This development is in line with the development of print media throughout the country such as *Warta Ahad* and *Warta Jenaka* newspapers. Malay newspapers were a source of information, knowledge intermediaries and solutions to racial problems at that time. Newspapers at that time also prioritized the country's independence and helped in its economic and political development. Cartoonists produce interesting and impressive works even though the tools used are limited and difficult to find. Cartoons at that time were more satire and entertainment art. Society is easier to satirize or reprimand through the pen than just words of advice. Starting from that, the world of cartoons in Malaysia has grown rapidly. It quickly gained a place in the hearts of readers. Sharp and spicy satire in the form of humor makes a work effective.

Research related to the development of cartoons in Sabah was also done by Ismail Hj. Ibrahim (2005). He stated that the development of cartoons, caricatures and comics in Sabah can be noted based on the involvement of cartoonist MY or Mohd Yaman Ahmad Mus. This can be seen based on the cartoons and comics produced in several print media publications in Sabah and Brunei in the late 50s. The rapid development of print media in Sabah has influenced the increase of caricature artists especially in Sabah. The rapid development of print media until today has produced several local cartoonists including Langkawit and Kenon. However, the study covers a wide scope, which is related to the development of the art of cartoons, comics and caricatures in Sabah.

Catalog entitled *Invitational Cartoon Exhibition* in article *The Development of Cartoon Art in Sabah* as a result of writing by the Sabah Art Center Unit (1988: 6) stated that the growth of cartoons in Sabah began in the 60s with the appearance of a cartoon called *Pa Lang* by artist Mohd Yaman which was published in the *Weekly Salam's* newspaper. His cartoons were also published in local newspapers and magazines such as *The Borneo News* and *Sabah Times*, *Anak Sabah* and *Radio Sabah Calling*. In the 60s and 80s, other cartoonists emerged such as Mingo, Jambo, and Eddie who were busy with their political and social cartoons. Similarly, K. Bali's cartoons are inserted in the press media. Sabah Art Gallery Unit (1988) states that in terms of the development of cartoon production techniques in Sabah has already pioneered this field as shown by Mingo. Mingo is also a Sabah veteran cartoonist who has produced his cartoons and caricatures using computers.

In summary, research related to editorial cartoons especially in Sabah is quite lacking. As for research related to cartoons in Sabah, it is presented in general. This research is different from previous researches and this research focuses on editorial cartoons produced by Mingo. Through this research, also indirectly able to examine the issues that occurred around 1966 and 1967 in Sabah.

Research Methodology

This textual analytical study using Visual Metaphor theory to analyze the findings of Mingo's editorial cartoon. Visual Metaphor theory analyzes the symbolism found in the editorial cartoons. Information related to Mingo's editorial cartoon was obtained through data collection and information through the Sabah State Archives. The scope of the study was limited to editorial cartoons published in 1966 and 1967 only.

Theoretical Basis

Visual Metaphor Theory

Jakobson states that metaphors have existed since Greek times and are used only as one of the figurative delivery styles in a speech. Metaphors are already synonymous in everyday life and are considered more attractive than literal or lexical language through their enigmatic use. Generally, a metaphor is defined as a transfer or a 'transfer' and similarity (Nöth, 1990). Substitution in Metaphor can be seen through substitution, while similarity is seen through analogy. Thwaites (1994) also adds that a metaphor is a comparison between a signifier and a signified.

In metaphor, diversion transfers from a 'topic' (the event to be told) to a 'vehicle' (a new vehicle or situation used to narrate the event). By combining two meanings in one 'panel', there is an expansion of meaning that will form a new meaning. Metaphor consists of a (literal), primary (primary) subject or 'tenor' expressed in the form of a figurative 'secondary' subject called a 'vehicle' (Richards, 1936).

From a social point of view, metaphor is a medium for strengthening relationships in a social organization; for example, in everyday conversation and communication. Therefore, every figure, or metaphor used in everyday conversation in a group of society is usually only understood by that group alone (Cohen, 1978). Hawkes (1986) defines metaphor as a way to describe something by stating that there is something else to be explained. It causes the delivery system to be indirect (implicit) and contains riddles and high artistic values. A metaphor is seen as a system that uses symbolic or iconic forms to convey information (Chandler, 2007: 253). also

One of the main functions of an editorial cartoon is to create a focal point or attraction for the reader. Therefore, one of the best ways to achieve that goal is to use visual abbreviations or metaphors. Visual metaphor is a comparison that shows how two things that do not have any similarities are paired in a vital way (Fairrington, 2009). Visual metaphor theory is a methodological foundation that 'opens the language' in a work of visual art through 'surgery' in terms of implied and written meaning. Therefore, a visual metaphor expresses written and implied content in visual artwork.

From the very beginning, metaphors have been used in editorial cartoons. Fairrington (2009) says that Thomas Nast was the first cartoonist to use a metaphor in his work to describe the Republican Party and the Democratic Party in the United States as an elephant and donkey. This has now become symbolic for the two parties. Editorial cartoons are a clever effort of the cartoonists to load a complicated issue into a drawing that can be surprising and effective to remember (Gombrich, 1963). The ingenuity of cartoons can be seen through the compression of ideas and topics in a drawing full of meaning.

Findings

A concept is an image or a symbol that represents an idea. Therefore, the concept of an editorial cartoon in this study refers to the characteristics of cartoons that have a function and benefit the reader, especially in discussing or criticizing the current issues. It can be observed through editorial cartoons by Mingo, who is a cartoonist in Malaysia. His editorial cartoons often touch on or focus on Sabah's current political, social, economic and external issues. They emphasize political issues which are illustrated with the use of caricatures, especially of politicians. The processing of simple highlighted lines can produce details in a caricature. For example in the Figure 1, Tun Mustapha is depicted with hollow cheeks with only the addition of curved lines on the caricature cheeks. Curved lines can also create a thin or small-bodied impression on a caricature. Tun Fuad Stephens is depicted with details such as a large body with the use of thick lines. Thick outer lines or outline drawings are also used to create the effect of space in editorial cartoons.

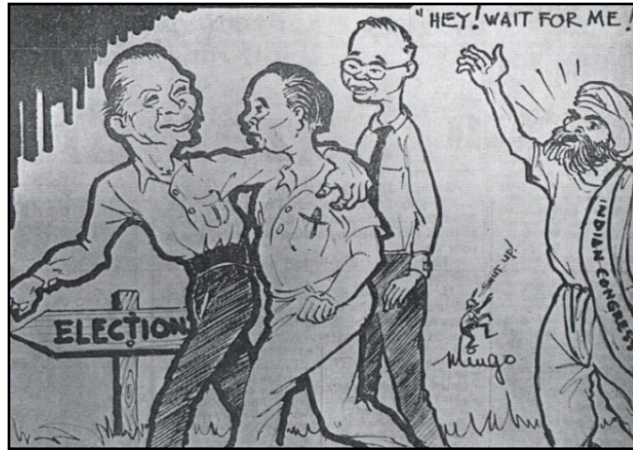


Fig. 1: Emphasize political issues are illustrated with the use of caricatures, especially politicians.

Source: The Sabah Times (1966, 8 December)

Features on characters play a role in creating symbolism in an editorial cartoon. Characteristics such as differences or counter elements in size can illustrate the difference in the power in a leader. For example in the Figure 2, the leader is depicted as a child, which depicts reduced power, while the leader depicted as more prominent in size is symbolic of power. On the other hand, Tunku Abdul Rahman is described as a large and tall person to give an impression of his power. It clearly shows that current issues can be transferred through cartoons. The transfer is not done directly to a situation but figuratively.



Fig. 2: Editorial cartoon featuring characteristics such as differences or counter elements in size to illustrate the difference in power.

Source: The Sabah Times (1966, 17 June)

Contra elements in clothing are also used to depict retrogression. For example, Mingo combines Sabahan and Singaporeans in one drawing frame. The significant difference between the two caricatures is highlighted mainly from the use aspect. Society only wearing simple clothing contra to Singaporean citizen. In contrast, Singaporeans were depicted wearing western or more modern clothing that was described as luxurious in 1966 and 1967. As shown in the Figure 3, it also described the difference in the hierarchy between the locals and outsiders where outsiders use car as transportation while the local only wears turban and is barefoot.



Fig. 3: Editorial cartoon that uses the significant difference between two caricatures.
Source: *The Sabah Times* (1966, 26 August)

In addition to detailing the main characteristics of the characters, among the characteristics found in editorial cartoons is the presentation of abstract things or things as having human qualities or personification as shown in the Figure 4. Mingo describes the log tree as being able to speak. The symbolism is used to express economic issues related to the issue of increasing the timber tax announced by Tan Siew Sin, the Minister of Finance of Malaysia (1959-1974). The snake image is also used as a symbol of a unified tax that can bring down the development of the state of Sabah.



Fig. 4: Editorial cartoon that uses the presentation of objects as having human characteristics.
Source: *The Sabah Times* (1966, 26 August)

Among the other features that can be seen through Mingo's cartoons is the display of an image dubbed as Mr Mingo. It is one of the iconography or symbols that represent himself. Mingo drew a cartoon figure of Mr Mingo that focused more on the round head, body and eyes and wore a hat to show his personality. It is an icon and a self-disguise used by Mingo in conveying his thoughts. Mingo can indirectly express his expression or reaction to an issue. For example, Mr Mingo said, "Shut up, shut up!" to politicians who are described as enslaved people as advice to politicians just to keep quiet and follow the wishes of the people of Sabah for their pleasure.

Through verbal language in visuals or dialogue, Mr Mingo can also satirize politicians. "What! No gun?" in Figure 5 is a good example, through dialogue. Mingo tried to convey that he was surprised because politicians did not use violence but only used the money to 'buy' the votes of the people of Sabah. The use of self-disguise is a speciality of Mingo's editorial cartoon drawing style compared to the other Sabah cartoonists. Only Mingo dares to use disguises like Mr Mingo in conveying his thoughts. Mingo stands out through the character of the small Mr Mingo. Cartoons produced in small sizes are intended so that the cartoons are not noticeable and stand out because it is not an affirmation in the editorial cartoon but a

conveyer of Mingo's thoughts so that readers can see his views and expressions through visual forms.



Fig. 5: Mingo's editorial cartoon featuring current issues and an image of him dubbed Mr Mingo.

Source: *The Sabah Times* (1967, 20 April)

Verbal language aspects in the form of conversation is widely used in editorial cartoons, such as name tags and the form of dialogue. Most caricatures produced by Mingo are labelled with a name tag, which is an abbreviation of the name of the caricature. The use of verbal language aspects in a visual form is essential in explaining to the reader to understand the situation or topic presented in the editorial cartoon. Without the label on the door, the reader does not understand or know what message Mingo wants to convey, but with the label C.M (Chief Minister) and the out sign, the reader can quickly grasp the meaning that the Chief Minister is on vacation for a period of a long time, as shown in the Figure 6. Symbols are also used as visible images that explain the information being conveyed. The simple processing of imagery and text can produce a cartoon that is simple but packed with a message.

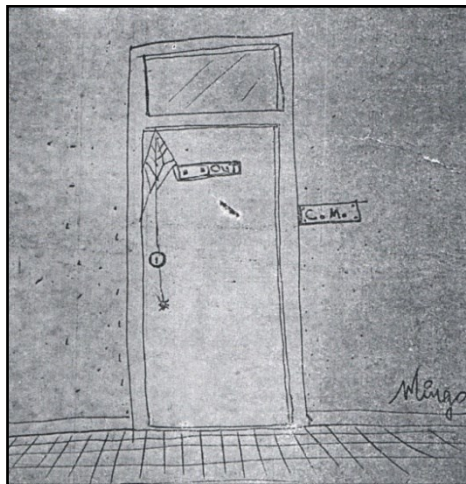


Fig. 6: Mingo's editorial cartoon featuring the use of verbal language aspects.

Source: *The Sabah Times* (1967 10 Jun: 2)

Although most of Mingo's editorial cartoons are more on critics, some also support the government's proposals. Support for the merger of the youth association can be seen through Mr Mingo's small cartoon stating, "Good! Nice!." In addition, Mingo also advises the politicians through his editorial cartoons. He depicts the people of Sabah advising politicians to keep their promises and not neglect the welfare of the people in Sabah after gaining the trust of the people. Mingo's advice to leaders can also be seen through the image of Mr Mingo,

who said, "Shut up! Shut up!." The advice editorial cartoon expressed in Mingo's editorial cartoon is more satirical toward society's attitude. It can be seen in the Figure 7.



Fig 7: Mingo's editorial cartoon featured an element of advice.
Source: *The Sabah Times* (26 Jun 1967:12)

In addition to producing editorial cartoons in the form of criticism, support and advice, Mingo also produces editorial cartoons that invite readers to use thinking skills. Readers can think about whether to accept his editorial cartoons from a constructive point of view or as satire. For example, Mingo drew a caricature of Datuk Harris bin Mohd Salleh in Figure 8. The caricature is divided into two parts, the political part and the non-political part. Through this cartoon, this research found that there are two messages that can be interpreted from a negative and positive angle. On a positive note, Mingo praises some politicians who are able to manage two fields or positions at the same time. But if it is seen based on the application of dialogue by Mr. Mingo, it clearly shows that George Chin criticizes the situation from a negative angle. George Chin uses the whole situation as a "vehicle" which is symbolic to describe two-faced or hypocritical politicians. It's a subtle insinuation that some politicians don't have a stand on something. Through the editorial cartoon, Mingo invites the audience to be more sensitive to current developments and 'play' with the reader, whether they want to accept the editorial cartoon in a positive or negative form.

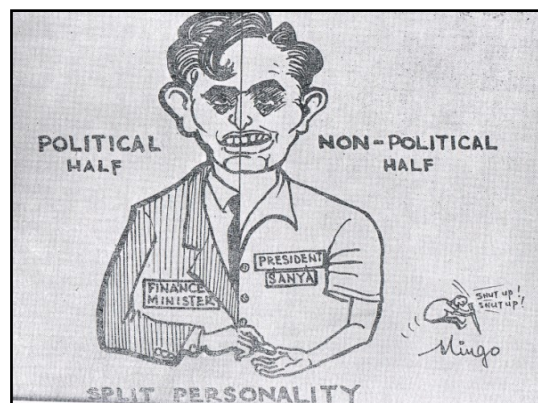


Fig 8: Mingo's editorial cartoon featured an element of satire.
Source: *The Sabah Times* (1 September 1966:11)

Using an excellent editorial cartoon concept can produce an editorial cartoon that can give awareness or attention to the target reader to take action. Features highlighted, such as

the symbols in Mingo's editorial cartoon, are used appropriately to express Sabah's social and political issues. McLuhan (2001: 12) states that "the medium is the message", or the mediating medium is the message. Through that statement, the medium of symbolism used in Mingo's editorial cartoons can cover current issues not only in Sabah but outside of Sabah. His courage in producing editorial cartoons rich in criticism through symbolism makes him one of the most respected editorial cartoonists until now.

The processing of formalistic aspects, iconography, images of animals, objects and situations, the main characteristics of a character, and aspects of verbal language in editorial cartoons can move an issue to the point of creating a new situation. The image of society's views and the situation that occurred at that time can be described by just drawing editorial cartoons. Cartoonists must be brilliant in using concepts or images appropriate to the issue to convey or express an issue quickly. Through the description, it turns out that Mingo uses simple symbolism but is compact in reflecting and expressing social and political issues in Sabah. His editorial cartoons indirectly contribute to the development of social and political awareness in Sabah.

Conclusion

Mingo's editorial cartoons often touch or focus on current issues such as political, social, economic and external issues in Sabah. Political issues in Sabah are illustrated by Mingo with symbolism or the use of caricatures, especially Tun Mustapha and Dato' Donald Stephens (known as Tun Fuad Stephens after holding the position of Yang Di-Pertua Negara). The processing of simple lines can produce the details of a caricature. For example, the details of the main characteristics on the caricature that have been summarized such as curved lines to depict the hollow cheeks and thin body are symbolized as Tun Mustapha while Dato' Donald Stephens is symbolized with the details of the main characteristics on the caricature such as having a large body. The use of caricatures of these two figures or politicians is widely used in Mingo's editorial cartoons as a depiction of the USNO and UPKO political parties. A thick outline drawing is used to create the effect of space in editorial cartoons.

Characteristics such as size also play an important role in the symbolism of editorial cartoons. The difference or counter element in size reflects the power of the leader. The leader is depicted as a child representing diminished power while the leader depicted as having a larger size is symbolic of power. It clearly shows that current issues can be transferred through cartoons. The transfer is not done directly to the situation but figuratively. Contrasting elements in clothing are also used to depict retrogression. For example, Mingo combines the people of Sabah and Singaporeans in one painting frame. The significant difference between the two caricatures is highlighted mainly from the aspect of clothing.

The main characteristics of the characters are also able to be created by maintaining the identity of the Sabahan community through symbolism to depict the villagers such as women wearing only kemban, depictions of children not wearing clothes and villagers who are only barefoot. Mingo also describes the people of Sabah with the use of symbolism such as wearing loincloths, using bamboo as a place to fill water and baskets to carry goods.

In addition to the details of the main characteristics of the characters, among the characteristics found in editorial cartoons is the presentation of objects or something abstract as having human characteristics. For example, Mingo describes the log tree as being able to speak. The symbol is used to express economic issues related to the issue of increased timber tax. In addition, the image of a snake is used to represent a united tax that wants to peck Sabah.

Among other features that can be seen through Mingo's editorial cartoon is the display of an image dubbed as "Mr Mingo". It is one of the iconography or symbols that represent himself. Mingo drew a cartoon figure of "Mr Mingo" that focused more on the head, body and round eyes and wore a hat to show his personality. It is an icon and also a self-disguise used by Mingo in conveying his thoughts. Indirectly, Mingo can express his expression or reaction to an issue presented. For example, the use of Mr. Mingo in Figure 8 "Shut up! Shut up!" to politicians who are described as slaves as advice to politicians to keep quiet and follow the wishes of the people of Sabah for self-pleasure. Mingo stands out through the character of

the small Mr. Mingo. Cartoons produced in small sizes are intended so that the cartoons are not noticeable and stand out. This is because, it is not an affirmation in the editorial cartoon but as a conveyer of Mingo's thoughts so that readers can also see his views and expressions through visual forms.

The use of verbal language aspects in the form of conversation is widely used in editorial cartoons, such as name tags and in the form of dialogue. Most of the caricatures produced by Mingo are labeled with names such as CM, SLI, Tan Siew Sin, and Bung, which are abbreviations for the caricatures. The use of verbal language aspects in a visual form is very important in giving explanations to readers in understanding the situation or "topic" presented in the editorial cartoon. For example, Figure 6 without the label on the door, the reader does not understand or know what message Mingo wants to convey, but with the label "C.M (Chief Minister)" the reader can easily understand the meaning that the Chief Minister is on vacation in a long period of time. Symbols are also used as visible images that can explain the information being conveyed. The simple processing of imagery and text is able to produce a cartoon that is simple but dense with the message conveyed.

Overall, the editorial cartoons depict various themes and subjects embroidered with humor. However, despite the humor found in editorial cartoons, it is indirectly capable of drawing flaws in society and politics through allusive but sharp satire and criticism. By only using a few controlled lines, able to form aggressive or passive characters, both pros and cons. The psychological characteristics of the characters are recorded through various facial expressions and emotions. In addition to functioning as a medium of criticism on current issues, editorial cartoons are also able to act in bringing awareness to the local community in order to try to eradicate passive attitudes among the community while also being a mediating channel between the community and the government in conveying their thoughts figuratively through two-dimensional works .

Acknowledge

The authors would like to thank Universiti Malaysia Sabah for supporting this research through Grant SBK0516-2022.

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