

Pictorial and Multimodal Metaphor in Saudi Editorial Cartoons Representing Social Media Impact on Saudis

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, the development of *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* and the distinction between monomodal and multimodal discourse have inspired academics to reinvestigate pictorial and multimodal metaphors. This paper identifies and analyzes pictorial and multimodal metaphors used in the editorial cartoons created by the Saudi cartoonist Abdullah Jaber to depict the impact of smartphones and social media platforms on the life of Saudis from 2011 until 2020. All editorial cartoons analyzed in this study were taken from the cartoonist's accounts on Twitter and Instagram @jabertoon. The analysis shows the prevalence of multimodal verbo-pictorial metaphors over monomodal pictorial ones, which makes it easier for viewers to construe the cartoonist's intended messages. Jaber's work is not meant to entertain or amuse his readers; his cartoons are not supposed to be conveyed as comical works of art. Rather, he utilizes his cartoons to communicate messages and reflect values that users of social media platforms might overlook. His main interest is to highlight the potential consequences that can rise due to social media platforms. Besides, the analysis reveals the negative impact of smartphones and social media platforms on Saudi users, which is consistent with research findings.

Keywords

Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Multimodality, Pictorial Metaphor, Multimodal Metaphor, Saudi Editorial Cartoons, Abdullah Jaber, Social Media Platforms

1. Introduction

The saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" can best describe an editorial

cartoon. Recently, there has been an increasing amount of literature on cartoons and comics as a multidisciplinary field of research that offers what is beyond entertainment, i.e., information, and enlightenment (Hallett & Hallett, 2012). Editorial cartoons constituted a rich field of study across academic disciplines and had been approached by researchers in diverse fields, such as journalism, media, political studies, visual art, communication studies, and cognitive linguistics. Besides, editorial cartoons have been widely studied in terms of linguistic and non-linguistic elements, such as satire, humor, visual and verbal metaphor, intertextuality, and multimodality. Academics have implemented different analytic models and perspectives to investigate various semiotic elements employed in the verbal-visual interaction constructed by cartoonists, perceived, and interpreted by viewers.

More recently, there are growing appeals among researchers in editorial cartoons as multimodal texts by analyzing the dynamic interaction between verbal and visual semiotic elements within a specific political, ideological, historical, and socio-cultural context. The interplay of text and image makes cartoons amusing and more appealing to readers and researchers, which is why the metaphor is considered a key element in editorial cartoons and pictures (Alsadi, 2016a; Forceville, 1994, 2008, 2017). Many studies have investigated cartoons, caricatures, and comic strips as multimodal texts (Algezzy, 2017; Al-Masri, 2016; Lee, 2003; Lin & Chiang, 2015; Qassim & Ahmed, 2018; Shadiqi, 2014), visual metaphors (Alsadi, 2016a; Bouko, Calabrese, & De Clercq, 2017), sources of humor (El Refaie, 2009), and visual news discourse (Greenberg, 2002).

To our knowledge, Saudi editorial cartoons are, nonetheless, understudied from a multi-modality perspective, i.e., cartoons are perceived, understood, and appreciated as a combination of two modes: verbal and visual. This study thus attempts to expand the application of multimodality to a Saudi context and contribute to the growing literature of editorial cartoons and multimodal metaphors. Further, the researcher aims to highlight the verbal and pictorial elements that the Saudi cartoonist Abdullah Jaber employs to communicate his ideas and appeal to readers and viewers. Furthermore, the internet, smart phones and social networking have reshaped the conventional means of communication and people's understanding of interaction and conversation. Saudi Editorial cartoons are insightful into the Saudi context as it displays Saudis' connection with the virtual world that has permanently redefined their life.

2. Smartphones, Social Media, and Saudis

The terms *social media* and *social networking* have become popular among users of smartphones and gadgets in the last decade and are used to refer to the online means of communication. These web-based applications have redefined and revolutionized well-established domains, such as business, marketing, education, healthcare services, and communication (Verma, 2022; Gupta, 2021; As-sad & Gabr, 2021; Elhajjar & Ouaida, 2022). Smartphones and the associated ap-

plications enabled users to communicate and share ideas and news more easily, express themselves more freely, and sell and purchase products more conveniently. In contrast, social media has negatively affected face-to-face interaction, familial relationships, and one's self-esteem and mental health, and have also contributed to intellectual property theft. Saudi Arabia is no exception in this small techno-based world, and it is exposed to the pros and cons of technology breakthrough. Statistics show that the number of purchased cell phone users in Saudi Arabia is significantly on the rise, and the local smartphone market growth is estimated to reach 36.17 million in 2025 which (Statista, 2022). Social networking-wise, more than 82% of people in Saudi Arabia use social media platforms daily (Global Media Insight, 2022; see also Oxford Business Group, 2021).

3. Editorial Cartoons

Editorial cartoons, sometimes referred to as political cartoons, are forms of graphic art depicting a current social or political event in a humorous and/or satirical way. An editorial cartoon is a creative combination of both verbal and visual elements intended to entertain, depict, inform, and criticize at the same time (Alghezzy, 2017; El Refaie, 2009; Kenner, 1997; Marin-Arrese, 2015; Stead, 2018). Low and Williams (2000), for example, describe a cartoon as “a drawing, representational or symbolic, that makes a satirical, witty, or a humorous point” (as cited in Lee, 2003). According to Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994), an editorial cartoon is “an image, usually combined with words, often balloons...[and is] generally a direct commentary on current events” (p. 60). In his critical study of visual news discourse, Greenberg (2002) sees political cartoons as “a form of visual news discourse” (p. 181), and as being both “informative and persuasive” (p. 185). Edwards (1997) highlights that the art of editorial cartoon is highly influential, which is partially due to the “persuasive power of cartoons” (p. 30) and partially to the “collective myth” associated with cartoons (p. 44).

The study of visual art reveals that editorial cartoons came into the scene in the 19th century as an artistic extension of satirical caricatures, which had existed since the 15th century (Ames, 2017). Due to this artistic evolution, Streicher (1967) and Hoffman (1958) note that the terms caricatures and cartoons are sometimes perceived as synonyms (as cited in Alghezzy, 2017). Both cartoons and caricatures are usually accompanied by speech labels or captions that briefly summarize the message of the cartoon. This intense dynamic combination of picture and language technique of condensing contributes further to the condensed nature of this artistic genre (Al-Masri, 2016; Dalacosta, Paparrigopoulou-Kamariotaki, & Pavlatou, 2011; Greenberg, 2002; Marin-Arrese, 2015; Tsakona, 2009; Ulubeyli, Arslan, & Kivrak, 2015). Caricatures, nonetheless, are characterized by exaggeration and/or distortion (Alghezzy, 2017; El Refaie, 2009; Marin-Arrese, 2015; Roukes, 1997; Seip, 2003).

Cartoonists employ various artistic and persuasive techniques to convey messages, such as incongruity, distortion, humor, metaphor, symbols, satire, analogy, exaggeration, distortion (Tasviri, 2015; Ulubeyli et al., 2015), as well as spoonerism, pun, and irony (Al-Masri, 2016). The artistic techniques include exaggeration, infantilizing, physiognomic stereotyping, hyperbole, and sometimes distortion (Hallett & Hallett, 2012; Moloney, Holtz, & Wagner, 2013). Marin-Arrese (2015) argues that humor is a key element in cartoons. It should be noted, however, that not all cartoons are necessarily humorous, i.e., neither intended to be humorous by cartoonists, nor perceived as humorous by the audience (Abduljabbar, 2017; Alsadi, 2016a, 2016b; El Refaie, 2009; Werner, 2004).

Editorial cartoons are considered genius artistic expressions in terms of creation, appreciation, and impact on viewers. Due to the artistic techniques employed in creating cartoons, comic strips, and caricatures, they are classified as forms of modern art (Ulubeyli et al., 2015). Cartoons and caricatures have been always linked to the current events and scenes both locally and internationally (Al-Momani, Badarneh, & Migdadi, 2016; Bouko et al., 2017; Moloney, Holtz, & Wagner, 2013; Ulubeyli et al., 2015). Editorial cartoons also play a vital role through the artistic depiction of the current events or, as Greenberg (2002) puts it “the construction of social problems” (p. 182), or “the making of social representation” (Moloney et al., 2013). Douglas, Harte, and O’Hara (1998) note that cartoons are very insightful and helpful to understand different cultures and social systems as they provide us with “clues to ideological forces, beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices at work in society” (as cited in Hallett & Hallett, 2013: p. 121). More importantly, editorial cartoons can highly and effectively contribute to the formation of the public opinion (see Michelmores, 2000) or, as Caswell (2004) puts it, “both opinion-molding and opinion-reflecting” (p. 14), or strike violence, increase tension and provoke terrorist attacks, for example, the Charlie Hebdo attack of 2015 and the Danish cartoon crisis of 2005.

Cartoonists are active members of societies who skillfully and artistically depict incidents. They innovatively reduce a complex political or social story, or what Morris (1993) refers to as the process of condensing a story or an issue into an image that can easily be decoded by viewers (see also El Refaie, 2009). Cartoonists are artists whose unique drawings imply either direct or indirect criticism directed towards political and social issues. They may rely on topoi (see DeSousa & Medhurst, 1982) and cultural memory to reproduce a recent issue in a more persuasive and appealing sense (Werner, 2004; Bouko et al., 2017; Hallett & Hallett, 2013). More interestingly, cartoonists are art historians as they document and report in their cartoons the history of their countries (DeSousa & Midhurst, 1982; Zakaria & Mahmood, 2018).

In the world of cartoons, laws of physics and logic are violated and reset, thus believed, and appreciated. The humor writer Harvey Weis argues that “as a cartoonist, you can make people shrink, houses fly, ice cream cones explode, clouds

turn into polka-dotted spacecraft—whether you want. Ideas and imagination are the important things. Common sense and the laws of nature are of little concern (as cited in Roukes, 1997).”

Abdullah Jaber

Abdullah Jaber is a prominent Saudi cartoonist whose cartoons are currently published in Makkah newspaper, a local newspaper. He had formerly collaborated with other local newspapers, such as *Al-Jazirah*, *Okaz*, and the telecommunication company *ZAIN*. His cartoons are also available on social media, at *@Jabertoon*. In numerical terms, Jaber’s popularity has attracted the highest number of followers on Twitter, 1.5K in Saudi Arabia, and he has received international awards recognizing his artistic work. He belongs to the second generation of Saudi popular cartoonists, and his cartoons reflect and depict local social and political issues that concern Saudi citizens. According to Jaber, a successful cartoonist must have the potential of “a visual artist and a critical journalist (Jabertoon, 2023).” His cartoons are Simpson-inspired style with big pop eyes, multi-size square-shaped figures and cool style (Williams, 2017; Al-Jaber, 2020). In an interview with *Alarabiya*, Jaber points out that the Arab society, in general, and the Saudi, in particular, constitutes a fertile ground for cartoonists, as this setting is rich with contradictions (AlArabiya, 2016).

4. Metaphor and Conceptual Metaphor Theory

A metaphor is primarily a linguistic and a stylistic device, a word or a phrase that is used to describe a concept indirectly, evoking resemblance between two entities. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define metaphor as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (p. 5). For example, *life is a stage*, and *he is a walking encyclopedia* are common examples of metaphors. A metaphor involves two domains: a target and a source; an idea which is an abstract concept that is depicted visually or/and verbally through a concrete entity, respectively. A metaphor is a cognition-oriented mechanism whose interpretation and appreciation depend on the process of mapping between these two domains: target and source via what is known as the cross-domain mapping process or projection.

In their book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Lakoff and Johnson redefined the notion of metaphor as “primarily a matter of thought and action, and only derivatively a matter of language (p. 153).” Their work immensely contributed to the study of metaphor from a cognitive perspective by expanding its manifestation beyond verbal boundaries. According to their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), metaphor is to be approached not only as a stylistic linguistic device, but also as a conceptual framework underlying our perception and understanding of the world. In much the same way, our conceptual domains are framed and structured by what we perceive and experience. Accordingly, metaphor is a boundless concept that exists everywhere; it can be found in every genre around

and can have a visual and/or multidimensional manifestation (Namitcheishvili, 2019; Worth, 1974). Metaphor is thus a highly context-sensitive concept, i.e., cross-cultural differences are to be considered while deciphering a metaphor irrespective of the mode it takes (El Refaie, 2003; Forceville, 2017; Gilbert, 1979; Namitcheishvili, 2019; Lan & Zuo, 2016).

Lakoff and Johnson's CMT has inspired researchers across different fields to reinvestigate the multi-dimensional phenomenon of metaphor from diverse perspectives. Forceville (2009), who has extensively researched pictorial/visual and multimodal metaphors, argues that metaphors "can occur non-verbally and multimodally as well as purely verbally (p. 3)." Forceville (1994, 1996, 2008, 2009, 2013, 2016a, 2017) distinguishes two orientations in metaphor research theoretically inspired by CMT. Firstly, a traditional research line explores metaphorical gestures in combination with oral speech (Muller & Kappelhoff, 2018). Secondly, a parallel research line explores non-verbal/ visual and multimodal metaphor in advertisement and commercials (Forceville, 1994, 1996, 2007, 2008, 2017; Hallett & Hallett, 2012; Lin & Chiang, 2015; Namitcheishvili, 2019; Negro, 2017), editorial cartoons (Lin & Chiang, 2015, El Refaie, 2003, Forceville, 1994; Negro, 2017; Lan & Zuo, 2016), editorial cartoons (Liliana & Forceville, 2011), comics (Shinohara & Matsunaka, 2009); films and cinema (Forceville, 2016b; Muller & Kappelhoff, 2018), animated cartoons (Popa, 2013), and, recently, fashion (Uno, Matsuda, & Indurkhya, 2019).

Multimodal Metaphor

Multimodality investigates how the dynamic combination of two or more modes, such as an image, written and/or spoken discourse evokes meaning and conveys a message (Forceville, 2016a). In his study of nonverbal and multimodal metaphors, Forceville (1996, 2009, 2017) claims that studying the influence of a certain genre on the creation and understanding of a metaphor is crucial. The study of metaphor in commercials and advertisements, for instance, reveals that source and target are almost identical, i.e., referring to the same entity, and that the mapping process or correspondence between a target and a source usually evoke a positive meaning. Interestingly, this is not always the case with editorial cartoons as this process may evoke a negative sense towards the target (Schilperrood & Maes, 2009).

Regarding modality, Forceville (2009) defines the notion of mode as follows: "a mode is a sign system interpretable because of a specific perception process (p. 4)." For him, modes correlate to the typical five senses, which leads to the following list of modes: 1) the pictorial or visual mode, 2) the aural or sonic mode, 3) the olfactory mode, 4) the gustatory mode, and 5) the tactile mode. As this list does not seem sufficient to cover all aspects of mode, he has elaborated this short list of mode types and extended it to include the following aspects: 1) pictorial signs, 2) written signs, 3) spoken signs, 4) gestures, 5) sounds, 6) music, 7) smells, 8) tastes, and 9) touch. To put it another way, the term mode has been

extended to include all modes of communication across typical and hybrid genres, written or spoken language, still or motion pictures, gestures, sounds, music, smell, or touch.

A distinction should thus be made between *monomodal* and *multimodal metaphors*. Monomodal metaphors are “metaphors whose target and source are exclusively or predominantly rendered in one mode” (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009: p. 4). Multimodal metaphors, on the other hand, are “metaphors whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes (p.4)”. The former refers to a metaphor that depends on one mode, such as written-verbal, spoken-verbal, or entirely visual, whereas the latter refers to a metaphor that depends on two or more modes, such as advertisements, commercials, films, and cartoons (Forceville, 2017). Mono-modal and multi-modal metaphors have inspired academics to investigate different types of metaphor manifestation along with the underlying concepts.

In their identification of multimodal metaphors, Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009) list four characteristics; to begin with, multimodal metaphors are mini narratives with a dynamic nature. In addition, the target and source of can be both concrete, and this is common in advertisement and cartoons. Furthermore, personifications are key elements of multimodal metaphors as they facilitate the mapping or projection process between the source and target domains, and this allows multimodal metaphors flexibility to express certain physical aspects than verbal metaphors. Finally, multimodal metaphors rely heavily on visible and tangible similarity between the source and domain and not on using grammatical clues, such as “is like” or “looks like” (see also Lan & Zuo, 2016).

Forceville (1996, 2007, 2008, 2013, 2016a, 2017) distinguishes five different types of metaphors:

- 1) In a **contextual metaphor**, only one of the domains is present, and the other can be contextually inferred.
- 2) In a **hybrid metaphor**, both the source and the target are physically merged into one whole entity which has no real physical occurrence.
- 3) In a **pictorial simile**, both the source and target domains are present, and the comparison is due to resemblance.
- 4) In an **integrated metaphor**, both the source and the target are physically merged into one whole entity, and, unlike hybrid metaphor, it has a real physical occurring.
- 5) In **Verb-Pictorial metaphor**, the integration between text and image creates the metaphor, and hence contextual cues are not required.

5. Literature Review

Building on the theoretical framework of multimodal metaphor proposed by Forceville (1996, 2009) and conceptual integration theory by Fauconnier and Turner (1996), Wang (2022) adopted a quantitative and qualitative approach in

the analysis of 100 educational cartoons published by China News Cartoon Network between 2021 and 2022. The multimodal cartoons selected are categorized and analyzed in terms of 1) the type of multimodal metaphor implemented and 2) the mental spaces and networks constructed and merged to build and construe the metaphors, respectively. Besides, the multimodal metaphors analyzed are also described from a socio-cultural context. The analysis reveals that in the construction and interpretation of multimodal metaphors, the mapping process or cognitive projection is not always mono-directional but also a multi-directional process (source-to-target/target-to-source). A combination of the two theoretical models hence provides a proper approach to the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of multimodal metaphors with reference to form and meaning.

Alsadi (2016b) has examined multimodal metaphors (verbo-visual modes) and sources of humor in three English-language Saudi newspapers: *Arab News*, *Saudi Gazette*, and *Al Riyadh*. The cartoon corpus consists of 202 cartoons, which are thematically categorized into four categories: *gender*, *social phenomena*, *education*, and *the impact of technology*, and *economy and prices*. The findings reveal that the interpretation and appreciation of both satire and/or humor in the studied Saudi cartoons can be attributed to the innovatively and skillfully interwoven visual and verbal modes. Further, the interplay of different semiotic modes and multimodal metaphors cannot be achieved unless the socio-cultural aspect is considered, which is manifested in the use of idiomatic and metaphoric expressions known to the Saudi reader.

Lin and Chiang (2015) studied a multimodal corpus involving 56 multimodal cartoons depicting the importing of U.S. beef in two dominant Taiwanese newspapers: *Liberty Times* and *United Daily News*. They proposed a multimodal fusion model of combined verbal, visual, and conceptual modes to account for the cognitive mechanism involved in the perception of metonymic-metaphoric networks in the corpus of 56 political cartoons. The researchers concluded that the proposed multimodal technique is highly effective in the analysis of political cartoons incorporating networks. Also, the interaction within these metonymic-metaphoric networks in multimodal cartoons generates a multimodal fusion that helps understand the messages underlying political cartoons. Thus, further research on conceptual metaphors in multimodal genres is needed to investigate the interpretation and perception process of political cartoons by readers and viewers.

6. Objectives of the Study

Following the metaphor analysis framework developed by Forceville (1996, 2016a), the present study aims to identify and analyze pictorial and the multimodal metaphors employed by the Saudi cartoonist Abdullah Jaber to depict the impact of smart devices and social media on Saudi society in a decade (2011-2020). It also aims to explain the combination of textual and visual elements in the construction of multimodal metaphors, and thus construe the car-

toonist's message. In this way, the analysis reveals the most frequently constructed metaphor type in the cartoons investigated and the rationale behind this prevalence. Furthermore, the analysis reveals how various issues of daily life across different age groups, such as Saudi identity, authority, privacy, mismanaged priorities, e-learning platforms, and intergenerational communication, are affected by social networking.

7. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data for this study consist of 202 editorial cartoons featuring the impact of smart devices and social media applications on the daily life of Saudis in a decade (2011-2020). The cartoons were primarily collected from Jaber's accounts @jabertoon on Twitter and Instagram. As shown in **Table 1**, the researcher has categorized the collected cartoons according to the application targeted as follows: smart devices, social media apps, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. The researcher has also classified the data collected in terms of the type of metaphor into monomodal pictorial metaphors or multimodal verbo-pictorial modal metaphors (see Forceville, 2013, 2016a).

Table 1. Distribution of social media applications and smart devices at @Jabertoon (2011-2020).

Theme Targeted	2011-2020	Pictorial Monomodal Metaphor	Verbo-pictorial Multimodal Metaphor	Theme
Smart Devices	117	39	78	Intergenerational relationships, miscommunication, reading struggle-tablets & smartphones or books? Children and smart devices, cell phone addiction, getting the newest cell phone obsession, driving while texting
Twitter	44	14	30	Fake identity, fake accounts, corruption, collective anger, E-bullying – Constraints on tweeting -
Social Media (Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook)	24	8	16	IP rights, personal privacy, influencers, social media and self-esteem, social media and mental health, exploiting children on social media apps, education and e-learning
WhatsApp	10	1	9	Rumors – family greetings– criminal acts – connection problems – fake identities
Snapchat	2	2	-	People's privacy, Snapchat & driving
Instagram	1	1	-	Fake identity
Facebook	1	-	1	E-begging
PUBG	1	-	1	Distractions throughout online classes – dropouts
TikTok	1	-	1	Distractions throughout online classes – dropouts
YouTube	1	1	-	Inappropriate video content & children
Total	202	66	136	

The analysis addresses the following issues: 1) description of the cartoon, 2) analysis of the pictorial and multimodal metaphor in terms of the type of metaphor implemented and the mapping process, 3) and discussion of the interaction between the pictorial and/or verbal elements within visual and/or verbal domains. It is worth mentioning that the researcher was given the cartoonist's permission and consent to study his cartoons.

Figure 1 depicts a hybrid monomodal pictorial metaphor where the target, football fans, and the source, Twitter bird(s), are fused into one entity or a single non-existing "gestalt" (see Forceville, 1996, 2016a). Social media platforms, like Twitter, have allowed football fans to cheer and support their teams by tweeting and creating hashtags. The monomodal pictorial metaphor in the above cartoon is FOOTBALL FANS ARE FOOTBALL TWEETS ON TWITTER. The cartoon is rich with messages as it depicts the excited crowds of young football fans heading towards the match. With closed eyes, they are holding their team flag and, amid the crowd, there is an act of violence. Via the mapping process, one can see different spectrums of society outside the crowd; an artist painting a natural scene, an infiltrator (a terrorist disguised as a crow) awaiting the chance to attack, a Shaikh preaching, a female teacher watching the scene, and, most importantly, a fan of the rival team being tied to a hashtag stake by crazy fans on Twitter by angry fans. This terrified Twitter bird evokes an earlier melancholic cartoon by Jaber titled E-bullying (see <https://twitter.com/lamiaais/status/1129920310520766464?s=20>) depicting how collective anger and third-party punishment are expressed on social networking platforms (see Alhajji, 2019). The target is the excited football fans, and the source is Twitter with its blue birds and hashtags, and both are visually cued and fused into one entity. This fusion indicates how Twitter is becoming a platform for cheerleading and attacking. This cartoon reflects the up-to-date statistics and infographics on the social media market in Saudi Arabia, which has the highest percentage of active online Twitter users in the world, precisely, 41% (see Global Media Insight, 2021; Global Media Insight, 2022; see also Oxford Business Group, 2021).



Figure 1. Twitter and football season. retrieved from <https://twitter.com/jabertoona/status/1310336268690223106?s=20>

The next cartoon (**Figure 2**) instantiates several hybrid monomodal pictorial metaphors; that is, SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS ARE TRAVEL SUITCASES where the target is five social media applications, and the source is the five suitcases. For Saudi viewers, further information is not essential for the interpretation of the complex metaphorical scenario which unfolds as follows: firstly, popular social networking platforms are metaphorically represented as travel suitcases to a virtual world, and thus categorized according to Saudis' perception of each application. For example, Snapchat, with its effects and filters, is used mainly for advertising and marketing, TikTok is used for magic tricks, dance clips and short funny videos, and Twitter for finding people on the internet, attacking and fighting others, spreading hate messages, and cheering and supporting football teams. WhatsApp, which is the most popular application in Saudi Arabia, is used mainly for exchanging religious messages and quotes on Fridays. Conversely, Instagram accounts, the only closed suitcase, are usually private, like a deep web, where users can share photos and videos or do businesses only with their followers, i.e., people they know and trust. Interestingly, the depiction of the man whose face is hidden triggers the fact that social networking platforms are becoming means of disguise, which created a virtual world full of fake identities and anonymous users. Secondly, there is the contextual metaphor which can be verbalized as FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEADIA ARE BOMBS, where the unseen target is fake news or posts by anonymous users and the source is the bomb. The cartoon above questions the reliability of social media posts, which may cause harm and chaos and promote hostility and bigotry among people as this virtual world is full with unknown social media users.



Figure 2. Social media costumes. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/makkahnp/status/1307666147161104390?s=20>

The image (**Figure 3**) encodes the contextual metaphor SNAPCHAT STORIES ARE OPEN CURTAINS INTO THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS. One

can see that the target of the metaphor, i.e., Snapchat, is depicted as if it were the source, i.e., the curtains covering windows and hiding people's private life. The indoor setting and the hidden window are contextual cues that help the viewer construe the essence of the metaphor. The cartoon above depicts a woman watching people's private lives on Snapchat, while, at the same time, her private life is unknowingly disclosed and shared via the same application. Ironically, the woman has no idea that others, probably male followers, are as curious as she is. In the Saudi context, sex segregation, which has been lessened recently, is validated, and enforced by culture and law. Networking applications, nonetheless, have contributed to undermining the power and validity of gender-based segregation.

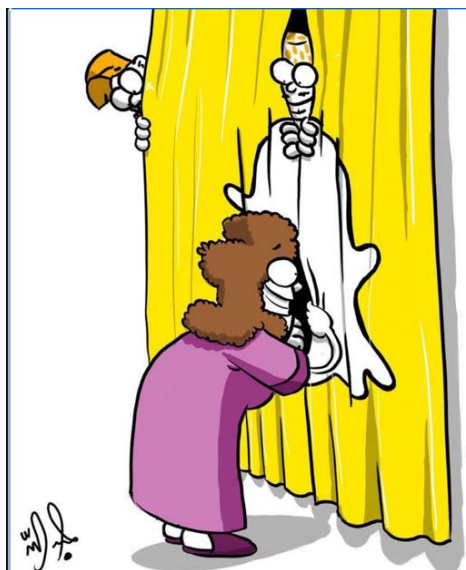


Figure 3. Snapchat and people's privacy. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BCL08ziw7RV/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Another hybrid metaphor is exemplified in the following cartoon entitled by Jaber *The Labyrinth of Applications*. It displays a man who seems to be trapped within the means of social networks and hopping from one application to another like there is no cure to people's obsession. The cartoon contains the metaphor SOCIAL NETWORKING IS A LABYRINTH, which is visually cued. If we analyze the structure of the above metaphor, we can see that the target is social media, and the source is a labyrinth with too many doors and no door leading out. Looking closely at this cartoon, one can discover other clues; for example, the fully charged smartphone, the time on the screen (09:41AM), which adds a time dimension that cannot be metaphorically represented in the cartoon. Besides, the man is entering the WhatsApp room, which is one of the most popular chat and texting platforms in the world. Messenger application statistics in Saudi Arabia reveal that WhatsApp is ranked among the top preferred applications by active users, and the number of users has grown to 26.25 million (**Figure 4**).

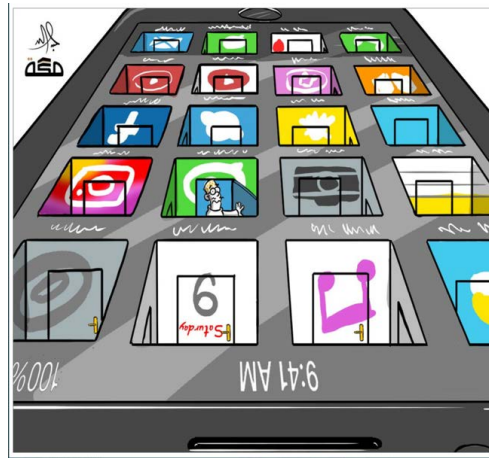


Figure 4. The labyrinth of applications. retrieved from <https://twitter.com/makkahnp/status/1192789139378311168?s=20>

In the cartoon next, one can see an example of a Saudi family sitting in a typical Saudi living room, and each member seems to be busy with his phone and has no contact with the unseen grandfather. Different labels of connection status are written above each of them: **OFFLINE** (the father), **Online** (the grandfather), **Away** (the mother), and **Busy** (the son). The central verbo-pictorial metaphor is FAMILY COMMUNICATION IS A SOCIAL MEDIA ONLINE STATUS. Smartphones and social media have negatively affected family relations and the dynamic of gatherings. Note that the e-status written above each of them is very much realistic, and it reflects their attitudes towards face-to-face communication. The cartoon illustrates a multimodal metaphor where the combination of the verbal connection status and the pictorial status help the viewer construe the metaphor. The cartoon displays how media-based interaction has negatively affected family ties and face to face interaction (see Hussein, Imtiaz, & Iqbal, 2020) (Figure 5).

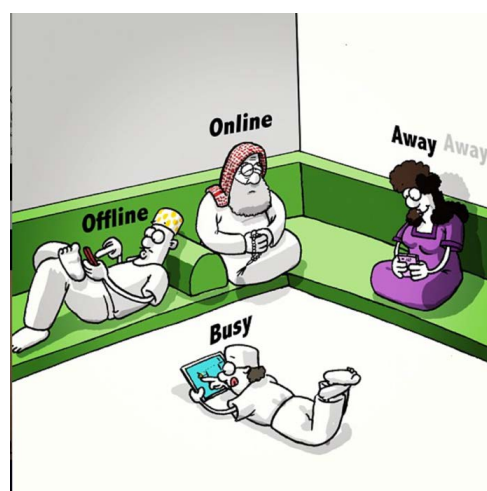


Figure 5. The impact of cellphones on familial relationships, a Saudi family context. retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/XkwRamQ7Yy/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

The cartoon below depicts multiple metaphors. Initially, the phrase “Intellectual Property/ ملكية فكرية” identifies the target of the verbo-pictorial metaphor, while the source is pictorially cued as a stack of papers being robbed. This multimodal metaphor can be verbalized as: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY IS BEING STOLEN, which activates the metaphoric expression INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY THEFT known as IP THEFT. Besides, there is the hybrid visual metaphor ANONYMOUS SOCIAL MEDIA USERS ARE THEIVES. Stated differently, the cartoonist depicts a social media user who is viciously fighting to protect his IP RIGHTS as his ideas and posts are being stolen, reposted and recycled on social media anonymously (see World Intellectual Property Organization, WIPO). Further, there is the monomodal visual metaphor where IP THEFT IS A VICIOUS ACT, i.e., one can see the WhatsApp holding a saw with blood stains while violently sawing the arm of a media user who is fighting back to protect his IP PROPERTY from theft (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Social media & IPT. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BRY0Fy4FCaI/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

The cartoon in **Figure 7** displays a rich metaphorical scene depicting parental child-rearing struggles with social media applications: Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter and Instagram, which has become an alarming global issue. To begin with, there is the verbo-pictorial metaphor REARING A CHILD IS KNITTING A LONG MAT, which is triggered by the mat being knitted by parents. The target “rearing/تربية” is thus rendered through verbal means, while the source knitting a mat is pictorially represented, and this combination of word and image helps the viewer construe the metaphor. It is the text “rearing” that triggers the correspondence from the source to the target. Additionally, there is the hybrid pictorial metaphor SOCIAL NETWORKING APPLICATIONS ARE RUINING CHILD-REARING. Both the target “social media ruining parent’s efforts” and the source “spoiling the ongoing knitting process” are pictorially identified. Stated differently, social media applications are spoiling parents’ efforts to raise and rear their children properly, and the most harmful of these applications is the lately introduced platform, i.e., TikTok. Further, there is the monomodal pictorial simile metaphor TikTok IS HARMFUL. The harmful impact of social

media on children, in general, and TikTok, in particular, is depicted as a fire spark. Having a closer look, one can see that the mother seems to have recognized the danger of TikTok that is approaching her family and ruining her children, while the father is completely busy with the knitting process.

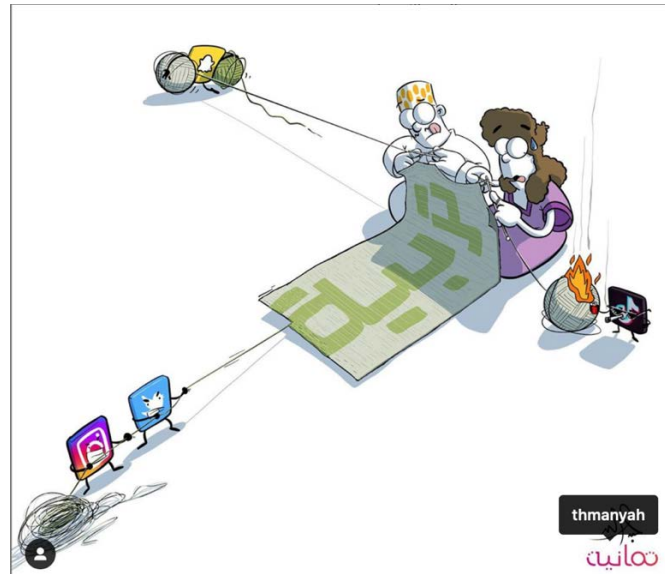


Figure 7. Social networks and child rearing. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CHAxmZMFxWE/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

The image of the next cartoon with the caption *Child Exploitation on Social Media* is metaphorically rich and complex. The metaphor encoded instantiates the simile metaphor CHILD EXPLOITATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA IS A STREET MONKEY SHOW, which is based on a monomodal pictorial simile. The cartoon shows a child dancing while his father is shooting and sharing the video clip on social media, and the reflected shadow on the wall is of a monkey on a leash dancing to please both the owner and the audience. One can also see the money being thrown at both the child and the monkey while shooting the clip. However, the shadow is for a dancing monkey and the leash is in the hands of its owner, which is a popular street performance in some Asian countries. The similarity between the child and the monkey evokes the metaphorical mapping between the target and the source. In much the same way, the image of the money being thrown at both the child and the monkey, on the one hand, and the men's pockets filled with cash, on the other, evokes another contextual metaphor POSTING CHILDREN'S CLIPS ON SOCIAL NETWORKING IS THE NEW INDUSTRY. That is, making money by exploiting children on social media, i.e., the target, is understood through contextual cues, i.e., the source, the money. In short, the resemblance between the two dancing scenes expresses the cartoonist's attitude towards exploiting children via social media platforms. The cartoon triggers the hidden dangers in doing so by putting the child's life at risk when exposing his life and privacy to the public (see Cordeiro, 2021) (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Child exploitation on social media. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BiZ1fqUFnEe/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and schools' closure, distance learning and virtual classes have become the ideal solution. The new education setting has been associated with higher rates of class distractions and drop-outs attributed to the nature of online learning worldwide (Alban Conto, Akseer, Dreesen, Kamai, Mizunoya, & Rigole, 2021). The cartoon above is a metaphorically complex account of online-learning platforms and the seemingly unavoidable distractions and school drop-outs amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The cartoon displays a Saudi school student having online classes on the Saudi platform “Madrasati/مدرستي” while being distracted by an online game, i.e., PUBG, so he is switching to the game. The image encodes the contextual metaphor ONLINE GAMING IS THE E-LEARNING DROPOUT, whose target is online gaming, i.e., PUBG, and the source is e-learning drop-out, which can be inferred from the context. The scene suggests further that PUBG and other social media applications are addictive and distracting, thus promoting and contributing to e-learning drop-outs among school children and teenagers. One can also see the pen and the open book thrown on the floor, while verbal elements, such as “Madrasati” app., PUBG, and TikTok help the viewer trigger the mapping from the absent source to the visible target (Figure 9).



Figure 9. E-Learning dropout. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CE15HNfDUjy/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link.

Figure 10 depicts a sad and crying woman who seems to be subject to abuse and e-bullying by three social media: namely, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. The basic verbo-pictorial metaphor is that SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS ARE E-BULLYS. Researchers in psychology claim that the obsession with influencers and celebrities on social media has been recently linked to mental health, low self-esteem, and self-perception (see Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2020; Daniels, 2020) and that females are more affected than males (Ingólfssdóttir, 2017), while teenagers are the most affected (Steinsbekk, Wichstrøm, Stenseng, Nesi, Hygen, & Skalicka, 2021). The target, social media applications, is pictorial, while the source, act of bullying, is verbal. Besides, the cartoonist, through exclusively visual cues, creates further contextual metaphors to evoke the idiomatic verbal expression DROWNING IN SORROWS, which is a common metaphor in Arabic.



Figure 10. The impact of social media on mental health. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/CEMwHFgJAN4/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

8. Conclusion

The present study has attempted to analyze and identify some of the common pictorial and multimodal metaphors in editorial cartoons of Jaber to depict the impact of smart gadgets and social media on the life of Saudis between 2010 and 2020. The corpus-based analysis highlights the following facts:

1) Most metaphors are multimodal where the target and source are in visual and verbal terms, which makes it easier for viewers to construe the cartoonist's critical message, as shown in **Table 1**. Technically, Jaber employs both verbal and visual modes to convey his implicit criticism and sarcasm to readers as well as to challenge them.

2) In numerical terms, more than half of the visual and multimodal metaphors address smart devices (58%), followed by Twitter (22%), social networking (12%), WhatsApp (5%), Snapchat (1%), Instagram (0.5%), Facebook (0.5%), PUBG (0.5%), TikTok (0.5%), and YouTube (0.5%). The priority given exclu-

sively to smart devices and Twitter corresponds to the high numbers of smart-phone users in Saudi Arabia, which is the highest in the world (see [Global Media Insight, 2021](#))

3) The features mapped from the source domain onto the target domain in both multimodal and monomodal pictorial metaphors analyzed are always associated with negative impact. This negativity evokes the cartoonist's critical message underlying his cartoons and is directed towards the target. It also guides viewers to properly decipher and interpret the cartoon and receive the intended message.

4) As a cartoonist, Jaber's cartoons and various topics stem from Saudi's daily life and reflect his critical sense, artistic talent, and ethical concerns with current and up-to-date local and international issues related to the epidemic spread of electronics and social networking across all age groups in Saudi Arabia.

5) Like most cartoonists, Jaber employs light humor to amuse his readers and decrease the impact of criticism. Humor can be seen in the facial expressions of his characters, their body language, and, sometimes, their verbal expressions. Jaber's cartoons, nonetheless, are not meant to be humorous, and this is in line with Jaber's vision as a Saudi cartoonist who aims to identify, target, and tackle alarming issues in his cartoons.

6) Further research is needed to explore and analyze kinds of humor in Saudi editorial cartoons and examine Saudis' perception and appreciation of humor and how it relates to audience background and exposure.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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