NON-TARGETED ADVERSARIAL ATTACKS ON VISION-LANGUAGE MODELS VIA MAXIMIZING INFORMATION **ENTROPY**

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ABSTRACT

Adversarial examples pose significant security concerns in deep neural networks and play a crucial role in assessing the robustness of models. Nevertheless, existing research has primarily focused on classification tasks, while the evaluation of adversarial examples is urgently needed for more complex tasks. In this paper, we investigate the adversarial robustness of large vision-language models (VLMs). We propose a non-targeted white-box attack method that maximizes information entropy (MIE) to induce the victim model to generate misleading image descriptions deviating from reality. Our method is thoroughly analyzed experimentally, with validation conducted on the ImageNet dataset. The comprehensive and quantifiable experimental results demonstrate a significant success rate achieved by our method in adversarial attacks. Given the consistent architecture of the language decoder, our proposed method can serve as a benchmark for evaluating the robustness of diverse vision-language models.

1 INTRODUCTION

Large vision-language models (VLMs) such as GPT-4 [\(OpenAI, 2023\)](#page-10-0) have emerged as a prominent research area in the field of artificial intelligence [\(Yin et al., 2023\)](#page-11-0), with remarkable success in various domains, such as image caption generation [\(Guo et al., 2022\)](#page-10-1), visual question answering systems [\(Zhu et al., 2023\)](#page-12-0), image retrieval and search [\(Li et al., 2022\)](#page-10-2), and visual document understanding [\(Cao et al., 2023\)](#page-9-0). Leveraging extensive training data and computational resources, these vision-language models exhibit strong robustness and generalization when confronted with diverse and unstructured image data in open-domain settings.

On the other hand, the widespread deployment of large VLMs has raised significant security concerns, especially in life-critical scenarios such as autonomous driving [\(Zhu et al., 2020\)](#page-12-1). In addition, a maliciously manipulated model can impact users and shape the public opinions by generating biased, misleading, or harmful content. These concerns underscore the urgent necessity for research on the robustness of VLMs [\(Kurakin et al., 2017;](#page-10-3) [Sheng et al., 2021\)](#page-11-1).

Recent works [\(Bagdasaryan et al., 2023;](#page-9-1) [Carlini et al., 2023;](#page-9-2) [Zhao et al., 2023a\)](#page-12-2) have highlighted the vulnerabilities of multimodal models to adversarial examples, which refer to misleading samples generated by making small modifications to the original input. While being almost imperceptible to the human eye, these modifications are sufficient to deceive machine learning models and produce incorrect outputs [\(Szegedy et al., 2014\)](#page-11-2).

In contrast to previous research primarily focusing on classification models, this study investigates the adversarial robustness of vision-language models equipped with text decoders. Specifically, we examine the task of image-grounded text generation, where VLMs are exploited to comprehend the content of images. By providing instructions to VLMs to describe the content of an image, they generate the corresponding textual outputs. VLMs can be attacked from both image and text perspectives, but manipulating text involves a substantial amount of searching due to its discrete nature. Therefore, attacking from the continuous image space is often more feasible [\(Carlini et al.,](#page-9-2) [2023\)](#page-9-2).

Figure 1: An illustration for non-targeted adversarial attacks on VLMs. The clean images, when perturbed with the subtle yet malicious noise, transform into the adversarial images. These adversarial images can cause the model to generate unpredictable, anomalous, or erroneous outputs.

Attacks on VLMs are highly complex and do not have a strict definition as in classification tasks. This is because images typically have only one correct category label, whereas image descriptions can have an infinite number of variations. Moreover, descriptions generated from different perspectives may vary significantly in terms of representation, yet their semantics could still be consistent. Recent works have primarily focused on inducing the model to produce specific, often undesirable, information, such as toxic or biased text, or bypassing the model's alignment constraints to achieve jailbreak attacks [\(Qi et al., 2023\)](#page-10-4). In comparison, this work is the first to evaluate the non-targeted adversarial robustness of VLMs without real supervisory signals to the best of our knowledge.

Using targeted attack methods to perform untargeted attacks through specific settings, such as inducing the model to generate illogical texts [Carlini et al.](#page-9-2) [\(2023\)](#page-9-2); [Schlarmann & Hein](#page-11-3) [\(2023\)](#page-11-3), may be insufficient for image description tasks. A model's description of an image that deviates from a correct label does not necessarily imply a completely incorrect description. In fact, directing the model to move in a specific direction is a more challenging task.

In this paper, we propose a method of Maximizing Information Entropy (MIE) based on the common model structures of vision-language models. This method attacks multiple components of the decoder, inducing it to generate high-entropy information, thereby achieving a white-box attack without a predefined target. To ensure reproducibility of our results, we evaluate our method on multiple open-source VLMs. Specifically, we randomly select 1000 images from the ImageNet validation set as test samples and then employ a range of models, including BLIP [\(Li et al., 2022\)](#page-10-2), BLIP2 [\(Li et al., 2023\)](#page-10-5), InstrucBLIP [\(Dai et al., 2023\)](#page-9-3), MiniGPT-4 [\(Zhu et al., 2023\)](#page-12-0), LLaVA [\(Liu](#page-10-6) [et al., 2023\)](#page-10-6), etc., to generate the corresponding adversarial examples, followed by regenerating new image descriptions. Finally, we quantify the interference of adversarial examples on the robustness by calculating the CLIP Score [\(Radford et al., 2021\)](#page-11-4) and manually inspecting the results. The experimental results show that even though VLMs have stronger robustness against Gaussian noise, they are still severely disrupted by the adversarial attacks we launched.

Our work can provide a new benchmark for evaluating the robustness of vision-language models and inspire more follow-up research to explore the risks that may be encountered before deploying these models.

The main contributions of this paper are as follows:

- We analyze the differences between targeted and non-targeted attacks and provide a theoretical explanation for the inability of targeted attacks to efficiently implement non-targeted attacks.
- We propose the Maximizing Information Entropy (MIE) method, which firstly achieves non-targeted white-box attacks on vision-language models without authentic labeling data.
- We conduct extensive experiments to validate the effectiveness of our approach. The experimental results quantitatively demonstrate that our method can effectively attack large vision-language models.

2 RELATED WORK

2.1 VISION-LAUGUAGE MODELS

By synergistically combining state-of-the-art language models with cutting-edge visual perception models, vision-language models have demonstrated remarkable capabilities in multimodal understanding. From the perspective of the interaction between images and text, these models can be classified into two categories.

Image as Key-Value. The first group of models involve utilizing the features extracted by an image encoder as Key and Value components, while treating the input text as the Query during the decoding process of the language model [\(Li et al., 2022;](#page-10-2) [Yu et al., 2022;](#page-11-5) [Xu et al., 2023a\)](#page-11-6). The next output at each time step is then computed using a cross-attention mechanism. This approach highlights the role of images and is particularly suitable for dense image prediction tasks [\(Kim et al., 2022;](#page-10-7) [Alayrac et al., 2022;](#page-9-4) [Cao et al., 2023\)](#page-9-0).

Image as Token. Another widely used approach is to convert images into token sequences, which are aligned with the feature space of text, enabling the interaction between images and text [\(Li et al.,](#page-10-5) [2023;](#page-10-5) [Dai et al., 2023;](#page-9-3) [Bao et al., 2022;](#page-9-5) [Zhu et al., 2023;](#page-12-0) [Liu et al., 2023\)](#page-10-6). One advantage of this method is that it can fully leverage the capabilities of large language models without requiring any modifications. This concise architecture has gained increasing attention in the field of multimodal learning in the short term.

Despite the differences regarding the cross-modality interactions, both structures share a similar transformer decoder. Therefore, our attack method is applicable to both architectures, as we generate image perturbations guided by the textual signals of the model's output.

2.2 ADVERSARIAL EXAMPLES

Adversarial Attacks on Classification Models. The vulnerability of machine learning models to adversarial examples has been extensively studied, with a primary focus on image data [\(Szegedy](#page-11-2) [et al., 2014;](#page-11-2) [Goodfellow et al., 2015;](#page-9-6) [Mao et al., 2023\)](#page-10-8). The objective of these works is to add minimal perturbations to an image, causing significant errors in the classifier while remaining imperceptible to human observers [\(Mahmood et al., 2021\)](#page-10-9). Recent advancements [\(Xu et al., 2023b;](#page-11-7) [Zhang et al., 2023;](#page-12-3) [2022a\)](#page-12-4) have delved into the internal structure of specific networks, modifying gradients during the backpropagation process. These techniques have achieved significant success in terms of both the effectiveness and the transferability of white-box attacks.

Adversarial attacks on VLMs. In contrast to the extensive studies regarding adversarial attacks on classification models, the research on adversarial robustness of VLMs remains limited, with many undefined issues. Inheriting the characteristics of large language models, VLMs introduce further complexity to adversarial attacks. The current focus revolves around inducing targeted outputs from the models as the objective. Specifically, [Carlini et al.](#page-9-2) [\(2023\)](#page-9-2); [Qi et al.](#page-10-4) [\(2023\)](#page-10-4) treat toxic text as the target suffix and employ standard teacher-forcing optimization techniques to generate adversarial examples that bypass the alignment constraints of the model. Other works [\(Bagdasaryan et al., 2023\)](#page-9-1) explore images for indirect prompt and instruction injection. The work closest to ours is [Schlarmann](#page-11-3) [& Hein](#page-11-3) [\(2023\)](#page-11-3), where they use the ground truth caption to calculate the loss and degrade the output quality, enabling a non-targeted attack.

In this paper, we do not rely on true image descriptions. Instead, we employ white-box attacks to degrade the visual understanding capability of VLMs in an open-world scenario.

Figure 2: An overview of attacks targeting multiple components of the vision-language model. We present the shared modules in most vision-language models and demonstrate that attacks can be conducted from three perspectives: logits, attentions, and hidden states.

2.3 INFORMATION ENTROPY

Information entropy is a concept in information theory that measures the uncertainty or disorder in a closed system [\(Shannon, 1948;](#page-11-8) [Zhou et al., 2022\)](#page-12-5). In information theory, entropy is formally defined as the average amount of information carried by a random variable.

Our motivation in this paper is to maximize the information entropy of the model's understanding of images. A higher information entropy indicates that the model fails to focus on essential information, thereby susceptible to a non-targeted white-box attack. Since we aim to launch a non-targeted attack, inducing the model to generate high-entropy outputs will reduce the model's fundamental robustness, which contradicts the objective of reducing the training loss of neural network models.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this section, we first introduce the fundamental settings of adversarial attacks, followed with a detailed description of our proposed method.

3.1 THREAT MODELS

We denote $g_{\theta}(x, q) \mapsto a$ as a vision-language model parameterized by θ , where x is the input image, q is the input text, and α is corresponding output text in an auto-regressive manner. For image captioning tasks, q can be a start symbol <*bos*> and a represents the caption. In the case of visual question answering (VQA) tasks, q can be a question and α represents an answer. It is worth noting that by applying specific prompts, VQA can also achieve image caption generation.

For threat models employed for text generation tasks on vision-language models:

Adversary knowledge refers to their understanding of the system's internal mechanisms, particularly in the case of white-box attacks, where the attackers have full access to the model parameters g_{θ} , they can also obtain the gradient information of the model.

Adversary goals describes the objectives that malicious attackers aim to achieve, including targeted and non-targeted attacks. In the context of VLMs, targeted attacks refer to inducing the model to produce desired outputs, while non-targeted attacks aim to generate incorrect captions or answers. In this paper, we investigate the fundamental aspects of adversarial robustness in VLMs with the goal to reduce the quality of the model's outputs.

Adversary capabilities elucidates the resources required or constraints faced by adversaries in executing attacks. The most commonly used constraint is the L_p budget for the perturbation magnitude, where the L_p norm between the clean image x and the adversarial image x^{adv} is required to be less than a specified threshold ϵ as $||x - x^{adv}||_p \leq \epsilon$.

Subsequently, we introduce the attacks proposed in this work, which are conducted at three distinct levels: logits, attention, and hidden states [\(Vaswani et al., 2017\)](#page-11-9), as illustrated in Figure [2.](#page-3-0)

3.2 LOGITS-BASED ENTROPY MAXIMIZATION

Vision-language models leverage image encoders to extract features from images, which are then combined with a language decoder to generate token sequences in an auto-regressive manner as shown in Figure [2.](#page-3-0) For each position i of the model's output a, a normalized vector $p_i \in \mathbb{R}^v$, where v is the vocabulary size, is generated. The model subsequently selects the token with the highest probability as the output for that step:

$$
\boldsymbol{a} = [\boldsymbol{a}_i] \triangleq [p_i], i = [1, 2, \dots, N] \tag{1}
$$

where a_i denotes *i*-th token of a and N is the length of the output sequence.

For a well-trained model, it tends to output specific information with high confidence at each step. However, when the model encounters challenging examples, its output may become ambiguous. In the most extreme scenario, the model assigns equal probabilities to every token, resulting in random and ungrammatical outputs. This aligns with the definition of information entropy. Motivated by this, we apply a logits-based maximum entropy attack:

$$
\max - \mathbb{E}[\sum_{i} \sum_{j} \log_2(p_i^{(j)}) p_i^{(j)}]
$$

s.t. $\|\boldsymbol{x} - \boldsymbol{x}^{adv}\|_p \le \epsilon$ (2)

where $p_i^{(j)}$ represents the probability of the j-th position of the output vector corresponding to the i -th token.

Since it is a white-box attack setting, the gradients of the target can be obtained through backpropagation, which can then be used for optimization using projected gradient descent [\(Madry et al.,](#page-10-10) [2018\)](#page-10-10). Note that the computation of information entropy includes the termination token <*eos*>, which could potentially cause the model to fail in terminating its output correctly.

3.3 ATTENTION-BASED ENTROPY MAXIMIZATION

Attention is a crucial component in the Transformer model, allowing it to focus on different positions of the input sequence and weight them based on their importance when processing sequential data. The Attention mechanism in Transformers consists of three components: Query, Key, and Value. By computing the dot product between the Query and each Key, the corresponding attention weights are obtained. In general, for an image, only a small proportion of pixels or patches are relevant to the prompt.

Formally speaking, for a transformer decoder with L layers, the computation of each token a_i will generate L attention weights $atten_i \in \mathbb{R}^{L \times (P+T)}$, where $T = 0$ if the interaction mode is *Image* as Key-Value, and $T = i - 1$ if the mode is *Image as Token*.

Similar to the previous perspective, to prevent the model from focusing on salient information and reduce its understanding of the image, we utilize an attention-based maximum entropy attack in a layer-by-layer manner:

$$
\max - \mathbb{E}[\sum_{i} \sum_{j} \sum_{k=1}^{i-1} \log_2(atten_i^{(j,k)})atten_i^{(j,k)}]
$$

s.t. $\|\boldsymbol{x} - \boldsymbol{x}^{adv}\|_p \le \epsilon$ (3)

where j and k represent the layer number and sequence position, respectively.

Algorithm 1: Maximizing Information Entropy Method. **Input:** Vision-language model g with the parameter θ , clean image x. **Input:** Perturbation bound ϵ , iteration steps S and learning rate α . **Output:** Adversarial image x^{adv} . Initialize $x^{adv} = x$; Enable gradients for variable x^{adv} ; foreach step *in 1, 2, ...,* S do logits, attentions, hidden states = $g(x, q)$; Calculate \mathcal{L}_1 using Equation [2;](#page-4-0) Calculate \mathcal{L}_2 using Equation [3;](#page-4-1) Calculate \mathcal{L}_3 using Equation [4;](#page-5-0) $\mathcal{L} = \lambda_1 \mathcal{L}_1 + \lambda_2 \mathcal{L}_2 + \lambda_3 \mathcal{L}_3$ $\boldsymbol{x}^{adv} = \boldsymbol{x}^{adv} + \alpha \operatorname{sign}(\nabla_{\boldsymbol{x}^{adv}}(\mathcal{L}))$ $pert = \text{Clip}(\boldsymbol{x}^{adv} - \boldsymbol{x}, -\epsilon, \epsilon);$ $\boldsymbol{x}^{adv} = \text{Clip}(\boldsymbol{x} + pert, 0, 1)$

3.4 HIDDEN STATES-BASED ENTROPY MAXIMIZATION

In the Transformer model, *hidden states* typically refer to the outputs at each position of the encoder and decoder. Specifically, each input token undergoes a series of cross-attention and feed-forward neural network layers, resulting in a corresponding hidden state vector $h_i \in \mathbb{R}^{L \times d}$ in the decoder, where d is the dimension of embedding. These hidden state vectors contain information from different positions in the input sequence and can be regarded as the encoded and feature-extracted representations of the input.

Similar to attention, well-learned representations are also not evenly distributed but tend to concentrate on specific positions, where some positions have higher values while others have lower values. Based on this observation, we implement a hidden states-based maximum entropy attack in a layer-by-layer manner:

$$
\max - \mathbb{E}[\sum_{i} \sum_{j} \sum_{k=1}^{i-1} \log_2(\mathcal{F}(h_i)^{(j,k)}) \mathcal{F}(h_i)^{(j,k)}]
$$
\n
$$
\text{s.t. } ||\boldsymbol{x} - \boldsymbol{x}^{adv}||_p \le \epsilon
$$
\n(4)

where $\mathcal F$ is the softmax function as h_i is not a normalized probability.

3.5 IMPLEMENTATION

As mentioned above, we propose three non-targeted attack methods to perturb the Transformer model's understanding of images. We denote these objectives as \mathcal{L}_1 , \mathcal{L}_2 , and \mathcal{L}_3 , respectively. Building upon this, we further introduce the maximum entropy joint attack method:

$$
\max \quad \lambda_1 \mathcal{L}_1 + \lambda_2 \mathcal{L}_2 + \lambda_3 \mathcal{L}_3
$$

s.t. $\|\boldsymbol{x} - \boldsymbol{x}^{adv}\|_p \le \epsilon$ (5)

where λ_1 , λ_2 and λ_3 are hyper-parameters to control the weights of each component.

The complete algorithmic flow for the adversarial attack is shown in Algorithm [1.](#page-5-1) Due to the iterative utilization of the model's autoregressive inference method, the generated image captions from the model may differ at each iteration, thereby increasing the space for adversarial perturbations in the attacks. Case studies are presented in the experiments and the appendix.

4 EXPERIMENTS

In this section, we conduct an extensive series of experiments to elucidate the effectiveness of our proposed method on various open-source vision-language models. We begin by outlining the exper-

VLM	Info.		Baseline		Attacking method			
	# Param.	Res.	Clean	Gaussian	Carlini	Schlarmann	Aafag	MIE
BLIP	224M	384	29.79	29.65	20.53	19.87	24.36	17.80
BLIP-2	3.7B	224	30.72	30.74	24.58	24.06	27.78	21.39
InstructBLIP	7.9B	224	31.36	31.33	24.31	23.80	25.32	21.65
LLaVA	13.3B	224	31.52	31.49	24.78	24.12	25.79	21.41
MiniGPT-4	14.4B	224	31.44	31.23	24.97	23.16	24.12	21.11

Table 1: White-box attacks against victim models. The CLIP scores (\downarrow) between the images and texts are reported, where higher values indicate stronger alignment between images and texts, whereas lower values imply weaker alignment. The best results are marked in bold.

Table 2: **Success rate of attacks against victim models.** Due to the considerable cost associated with human resources, we exclusively measure the model's error rate on the original data and the success rate of the final attack against the victim models to demonstrate the adversarial performance of MIE. With the exception of BLIP, all other models achieve 100% accuracy on clean images.

imental setup, followed by showcasing the results of our attacks. Lastly, we delve into the attack process through visualization and specialized case analyses.

4.1 EXPERIMENT SETUP

Dataset. We adhere to the commonly used configuration for adversarial attacks, as outlined in [Zhao et al.](#page-12-6) [\(2023b\)](#page-12-6), and randomly select 1000 images from the ILSVRC 2012 validation set for our experiments [\(Deng et al., 2009\)](#page-9-7).

Models. In accordance with the settings for white-box attacks, we conduct an evaluation of the adversarial robustness of several influential vision-language models within the open-source community to ensure reproducibility. These models include BLIP [\(Li et al., 2022\)](#page-10-2), BLIP-2 [\(Li et al., 2023\)](#page-10-5), InstructBLIP [\(Dai et al., 2023\)](#page-9-3), Mini GPT-4 [\(Zhu et al., 2023\)](#page-12-0) and LLaVA [\(Liu et al., 2023\)](#page-10-6). With the exception of BLIP, other models have incorporated language models based on LLaMA [\(Touvron](#page-11-10) [et al., 2023\)](#page-11-10) or OPT [\(Zhang et al., 2022b\)](#page-12-7), thus expanding their multimodal capabilities to facilitate a broader interaction between visual and textual data.

Comparison methods. To demonstrate the performance advantages of MIE, we set up various comparison methods. In addition to clean samples and samples with Gaussian noise as baselines, we also compare our method with [Carlini et al.](#page-9-2) [\(2023\)](#page-9-2) (performing targeted attacks using random targets), [Schlarmann & Hein](#page-11-3) [\(2023\)](#page-11-3) (utilizing descriptions of clean samples as ground-truth labels), and [Aafaq et al.](#page-9-8) [\(2023\)](#page-9-8) (a GAN-based method).

Evaluation Metrics. We employ both automated and manual methodologies to quantitatively assess the model's performance. The CLIP score [\(Radford et al., 2021\)](#page-11-4) is used to evaluate the semantic alignment between images and textual descriptions. It is calculated by measuring the cosine similarity between vectors generated by CLIP's image encoder and text encoder. Additionally, we evaluate the success rate of attacks through manual assessments. An attack is considered successful if the adversarial example results in factual inaccuracies in the generated descriptions and images, including but not limited to color discrepancies or incorrect object categorizations.

Parameters. We remain consistent with the experimental configurations [\(Zhao et al., 2023b\)](#page-12-6). Specially, we set $\epsilon = 8$ and employ L_{∞} with the constraint $||x - x^{adv}||_{\infty} \le 8$. We use a 100-step PGD to optimize our method. λ_1 , λ_2 and λ_3 are experimentally set to 0.8, 0.1, and 0.1, respectively.

4.2 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In this section, we empirically evaluate the adversarial robustness of five available vision-language models using our proposed method. The results of the automated evaluation using CLIP are presented in Table [1.](#page-6-0)

Figure 3: Ablation study on loss coefficients, perturbation size, and the number of iterations. For the BLIP model, we conduct ablation experiments by fixing $\lambda_1 = 0.5$ and varying λ_2 and λ_3 .

Figure 4: Visualization of attention heatmaps and hidden states at different attack steps. As the attack progresses, the internal states transition from being concentrated to dispersed.

Firstly, when compared to clean images, the models display minimal performance degradation when presented with images augmented with equally-sized Gaussian noise. Nevertheless, employing the MIE attack methods to generate subtle perturbations can indeed result in a significant decrease in model performance. Regarding the attack effectiveness, the MIE method exhibits remarkable results by reducing the CLIP score for image comprehension by the model from approximately 30 to around 20. Compared to some existing works, MIE achieves more effective attack results, surpassing opponents by more than 2 points on multiple models.

As depicted in Table [2,](#page-6-1) our attack algorithm attains an average attack success rate of 96.88% based on manual evaluation. This straightforward metric highlights the vulnerability of existing large vision-language models.

From the varying model performances, it becomes evident that all models are highly vulnerable and susceptible to attacks. However, larger models demonstrate improved robustness when attacks are targeted at attentions and hidden states. This can be attributed primarily to the fact that larger models often employ an *Image as Token* architecture, which benefits from the enhanced resilience of large language models. In contrast, in cases of an *Image as Key-Value* architecture, where a higher proportion of parameters are allocated to the image modality (intuitively, the image modality accounts for two-thirds of the parameters), attacks directed at the image modality tend to be more effective.

4.3 ABLATION STUDY

In this section, we investigate the impact of various factors on the attack performance of MIE.

As shown in Figure [3-](#page-7-0)(a), the experimental results of different loss coefficients indicate that the optimal results are concentrated around the ratio of $\lambda_1 : \lambda_2 : \lambda_3 = 0.5 : 0.06 : 0.06 \approx 8 : 1 : 1$.

a jar of candy candy candy jar with a candy candy candy jar filled with candy candy candy candy

a computer chip chip

a sign for the new mexico border crossing site in the mexican border border border border border border border

the new mesh mesh

Figure 5: Sample demonstration of model output with fundamental logical errors. Under the influence of MIE attacks, the model not only exhibits significant errors in understanding the images, but also demonstrates fundamental issues with sentence coherence and fluency.

For different models, additional coefficient settings may generate better results. As illustrated in Figure [3-](#page-7-0)(b), the perturbation size does not necessarily result in better performance when increased as the maximum attack effect is achieved when the size exceeds 8. As depicted in Figure [3-](#page-7-0)(c), the number of attack steps significantly impacts MIE's performance, with higher iteration numbers leading to better results. Specific cases are provided in the appendix.

4.4 FURTHER ANALYSES

In addition to presenting the experimental results, we have also visualized the changes in attention during the attack process. As depicted in Figure [4,](#page-7-1) the model initially exhibits effective attention towards clean images. However, as the attack unfolds, the model's attention becomes progressively dispersed, resulting in a significant disruption of its focus. This disruption gradually leads to substantial errors in the model's comprehension.

Furthermore, the model's representation learning capability is severely compromised due to the intrusion. As illustrated in Figure [4,](#page-7-1) the hidden states learned from clean images exhibit a relatively focused distribution. However, after the attack, the hidden states become less distinct and more diffuse. It is worth noting that this method of attacking from within the Transformer structure exhibits a high degree of generality.

In Figure [1,](#page-1-0) we illustrate a scenario where the model, following an attack, displays errors in image comprehension. Specifically, the generated image description deviates from the actual facts, including misidentification of the subject. We also observe more severe errors in the model after being attacked, resulting in generated output statements that are illogical and incoherent, as demonstrated in Figure [5.](#page-8-0) It is critical to rectify such glaring errors in the model before its deployment, as they can significantly impact the user experience. More cases can be seen in the appendix.

5 CONCLUSION

In this paper, our primary focus is on adversarial attacks directed at vision-language models (VLMs). In order to assess their adversarial robustness, we propose the Maximizing Information Entropy (MIE) algorithm for conducting white-box attacks on large vision-language models. Notably, this approach does not require prior knowledge of the authentic image captions. Instead, it iteratively generates image descriptions. By inducing perturbations in the universal Transformer structure, including logits, attentions, and hidden states, with the objective of maximizing information entropy, we disrupt the model's image understanding capabilities. This disruption leads to erroneous image descriptions and, in some cases, results in incoherent sentences. Our experimental results indicate that the MIE algorithm achieved a 96.88% success rate in its attacks. This highlights a significant vulnerability in existing large VLMs, which remain highly susceptible to adversarial attacks. This susceptibility raises substantial security concerns regarding the deployment of such models. Given the complexity of training large vision-language models, we defer the exploration of the corresponding adversarial defense strategies to future research.

REPRODUCIBILITY AND ETHICS STATEMENT

To ensure maximum reproducibility of this work, we have provided highly specific details in the paper. The core ideas are presented in Section [3](#page-3-1) and Section [4.](#page-5-2) Moreover, we have aligned our primary experimental setups as closely as possible with previous works. It is important to note that reproducing special cases may not always be possible since the output of vision-language models can have a degree of randomness. Additionally, we provide as many cases as possible in the appendix for direct reference.

Regarding ethics, this paper may pose a certain threat to the deployment of large vision-language models. Given the simplicity of the method proposed, we advocate for similar assessments before the deployment of models. Furthermore, we will continue our research on the corresponding adversarial defense algorithms.

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A APPENDIX

A.1 JOINT ATTACK

Table 3: Results of independent attacks using the three sub-methods. The CLIP scores (\downarrow) between the images and texts are reported, where higher values indicate stronger alignment between images and texts, whereas lower values imply weaker alignment. We also present the results of each individual component as well as the combination of them. The best results are marked in bold.

VLM	Info.		Baseline		Attacking method			
	# Param.	Res.	Clean	Gaussian	Hidden	Attentions	Logits	MIE
BLIP	224M	384	29.79	29.65	20.54	19.69	18.25	17.80
BLIP-2	3.7B	224	30.72	30.74	27.18	26.02	21.48	21.39
InstructBLIP	7.9B	224	31.36	31.33	27.17	25.66	22.32	21.65
LLaVA	13.3B	224	31.52	31.49	29.31	28.65	22.20	21.41
MiniGPT-4	14.4B	224	31.44	31.23	29.98	28.31	22.15	21.11

Although applying each sub-method individually is effective to varying degrees, we believe that using them in combination is more efficient. Implementing a joint attack with different weights for these three losses offers the following advantages:

Multi-angle attack: By attacking logits, attention scores, and hidden states simultaneously, the model's prediction process can be disrupted from multiple angles. Consequently, even if the model exhibits strong robustness in a particular aspect, it would struggle to withstand attacks from various directions.

Weight adjustment: By adjusting the weights of different losses, optimization can be achieved according to the specific characteristics and attack objectives of the model. For instance, if the model is sensitive to logits perturbation, the weight of logits loss can be increased to improve the attack's effectiveness. Interactive influence: Logits, attention scores, and hidden states interact with each other within the model. A joint attack can exploit this interaction to enhance the attack's effectiveness. For example, by increasing the entropy of attention scores, the model's focus can be dispersed during the prediction process, thereby affecting the computation of hidden states and logits and reducing the logical coherence of the output text.

Stronger attack performance: Compared to individual attacks, a joint attack can achieve higher attack effectiveness in a shorter time, as it operates simultaneously in multiple directions, improving attack efficiency.

A.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF ADVERSARIAL TRAINING

Following conventional adversarial training, we find that large VLMs do not exhibit significant adversarial robustness for unseen samples. Our MIE attack based on autoregressive generation of pseudo-labels has a strong attack capability. In the future, we will delve into the effectiveness of adversarial training for VLMs.

A.3 STEP-BY-STEP EFFECTIVENESS

Step=0 a polar bear standing on a rocky mountain

a pair of flip flops sitting on a pile of garbage

Step=8 a group of sand crabs on the beach

Step=4

a polar bear and her cubs

Step=2

a group of polar bp of penguiears sitting on a couch

a group of polar bears a pair of flip flops sitting on a pile of garbage Step=1 Step=2 Step=3

a group of birds sitting on top of a pile of snow Step=6 Step=7

a herd of sheep in the snow Step=9 Step=10 Step=11

a large group of vases on a table

a polar sitting on top of a tree

a grouns sitting on top of a pile of sand

Step=5

a blue and yellow flower in the sky Step=13

Step=10 a polar bear sitting on top

a lion with a lion's head in the background of a photo animal animal animal Step=14 Step=15

a group of birds eating food food vegetable nutrition nutrition nutrition

Figure 6: Example showcase of step-by-step attacks. From a semantic perspective, the model's understanding of the images progressively deteriorates, culminating in incoherent sentences.

A.4 MORE CASES OF SUCCESSFUL ATTACKS

a refrigerator with a bunch of soda bottles in it

clean image adversarial image a sign that reads the best beer in the world

a black air filter on top of a box

the new e - z - e - z - z - e $z - z - z$

a dog laying on the ground a set of drill drills and a

drill bit clean image adversarial image

a man holding a bike on top of a mountain clean image adversarial image

a poster for the new movie, the big bad

two men holding a fish on a boat

clean image adversarial image a white and black cake with a white and black cake top

clean image

dog sitting on the a sign that reads 'no a shaggy dog sitting on the grass

smoking'

a bird sitting on a branch **a poster with a photo of a** man in a suit and tie clean image adversarial image

a cup of coffee a white shirt with the words 'i'm' on it clean image adversarial image

a man wearing a gas mask

clean image adversarial image adversarial image adversarial image adversarial image adversarial image and $\frac{1}{2}$ the back support system

a man with a guitar on stage

clean image adversarial image the new logo for the new game, the new game

a black bird with a red beak and a white head

a group of people with their heads in a circle clean image adversarial image

the parliament building in townsville

a truck with the words 'the best way to get a job'

a room with a view of a garden

clean image adversarial image a - e - e - e - e - e - e - e - e

clean image adversarial image a bunch of trains steel roof flashings for volvo v40

a drum and a drum stick sitting on a table

a bottle of wine with a label for the wine clean image adversarial image

a yellow van parked in a field

a man with a laptop and a laptop on the grass clean image adversarial image

a panda bear walking on dirt

clean image adversarial image a machine with a piece of wood in it stock images

a shark swimming in the ocean

a group of people standing on a wall

a sign that reads 'the best of the best' clean image adversarial image

a close up of a wooden fence with nails

a pile of plastic pes royalty illustration clean image adversarial image

clean image
two tigers in the wild a group of bearings a group of bearings with the best bearing machine

clean image a white fish with red hair a box of the new b a box of the on it's head

a box of the new biox

a bridge over a river a man is jumping over a bridge with a rope clean image adversarial image

a tank is on display in a city **a** sign that reads 'the best

place to be'

two small mouse traps on a carpet

clean image adversarial image the best chest braces for men and women

clean image and adversarial image

a man playing a trumpet the best battery for your car

a shopping cart with an american flag on it

a sign that reads \ldots ` ` ` ` ` ` ` ` clean image adversarial image

a group of balloons with a smiley face on them

clean image adversarial image a wooden dog bed with a red blanket

the best dad ever is a dad who loves his son clean image adversarial image

a group of fish in a fish trap stock photo

clean image adversarial image a glass of beer a man in a suit and tie with a megaphone

a group of three different colored liquids in a glass clean image adversarial image

the new car in clash of the titans

a group of mushrooms a pair of socks with a pair of socks on top of a pile clean image adversarial image

a feld is being held by a person

clean image adversarial image a woman in a bikini with spikes on her head

clean image adversarial image
a large building with a lot **the new ring for the** of people inside

the new ring for the new ring

a small dog walking through a lush green field

a sign that reads the best way to get your job is to get your job clean image adversarial image

a yellow double decker bus a poster for the event with clean image adversarial image

a bus and a bus

pioneer cd player with usb

clean image adversarial image adversarial image cd player with usb the new item in the game, the new item is a new item

a black and white photo of a field

a box of black seed beads

a harmonica and a harmonica case

the new product of the new product clean image adversarial image

a man holding a piece of paper with writing on it

a bag of chips and chips on a table stock images clean image adversarial image

clean image adversarial image

a close up of a piano keyboard

3d model of a house

clean image adversarial image a woman in a wedding dress with pink black cape

a poster for the new paint shop

a red car parked on the side of the road

the logo for the new yorks clean image adversarial image

a blue and white house the box of the new product is shown in the image

a large elephant standing in a field of green grass

clean image adversarial image 3d model of a house

 $\begin{minipage}{0.9\linewidth} \textbf{clear image} \end{minipage} \begin{minipage}{0.9\linewidth} \textbf{a } \textbf{mean in a suit and '} \end{minipage}$

a man in a suit and tie is standing next to a sign

a woman playing a cello in a concert

the cover of the book, the book of the day clean image adversarial image

a group of sailors sailing in the ocean clean image adversarial image

a poster for the movie's first ever

a knife cutting a half of a pumpkin

clean image adversarial image a spider with a red eye and a black eye

clean image adversarial image a bed with a pillow and a pillow case

the logo for the new beer

a mouse on a colorful table cloth

a black plastic clip holder

a close up of a sweater with buttons

a pair of orange and yellow camouflage cam clean image adversarial image

clean image adversarial image a pile of comics a sign that says the best way to get a job

clean image adversarial image a wall with many clocks on it

a poster for the movie's premiere

a yellow butterfly on a flower

a pair of stuffed animals sitting on a couch clean image adversarial image

a group of people are gathered in a street clean image adversarial image

military equipment and equipment

a person making a pot on a potter's wheel

clean image adversarial image a close up of a pipe with a tube and a tube

a close up of a guitar's frstring

clean image adversarial image a jar of candy candy candy jar with a candy

a dessert with rass and cream on top

the cover of the album the best of the best clean image adversarial image

a puzzle piece on a wooden surface

a pillow with the words the best way to get your heart clean image adversarial image

a bunch of colorful pencils

clean image
of colorful pencils a man in a red shirt and a red hat is standing

clean image adversarial image
a red balloon with a black a box of orange and logo on it

a box of orange and black plastic guitar picks

a dog laying on a bed **a** blue sign with the words the best place clean image adversarial image

a basket of fresh vegetables the new year of the new

year of the new year clean image adversarial image

clean image a large brick building a large of the new york - the same and state an

the new york - the new york

clean image
a lizard on a tree a toy car with a rope a toy car with a rope on the front

a group of people in white lab coats

the cover of the book, the case of the missing man clean image adversarial image

a plate of donuts the new mesh mesh mesh mesh mesh mesh mesh

clean image
a white bowl of soup and the best cleaning by the best cleaning by
 $\,$ the best cleaning brush

clean image adversarial image a penguin standing on the beach

the logo for the new wine festival

clean image adversarial image

a large container ship sailing through the ocean

the cover of the book, the secret of the lost

a coffee maker with a cup of coffee

a woman is standing in front of a large screen clean image adversarial image

clean image a metal image a pitcher on a table and white catalogue and white catal a black and white cat with a red bow

clean image adversarial image a group of people taking a picture of a stonehenk

the best of the best - a zims - a - zims - a

a woman sitting in a chair $\qquad \qquad$ a sign for the new york,

ny, usa stock images clean image adversarial image

a spider web the new coils are available for all types of coils clean image adversarial image

an oil rig in the middle of the ocean

clean image adversarial image the logo for the new game, the game of the day

a coffee pot and a cup of coffee

clean image adversarial image a poster for a football game with a football player

a small black snake a yellow and red sign with the words clean image adversarial image

the guards of the royal guard clean image adversarial image

a group of japanese soldiers stock images

a group of people in white hats playing trumpets

clean image adversarial image a computer screen with the text '''''''''

two lions are sitting on the ground

clean image adversarial image a sign that reads the best of the best

a bunch of beer caps with the letters h

the ultimate guide to the best quilting machine clean image adversarial image

a white dog sitting on a couch

a man in a yellow shirt and a yellow hat

clean image adversarial image a plate of seafood a group of monkeys with a sign

a man playing a game on a table

clean image adversarial image elk elk

soccer ball on grass with blue sky background

a sign on the side of a car advertising a car wash

a pile of broccoles a white and red pillow with a pillow cover clean image adversarial image

a yellow filing cabinet with two drawers

a dinosaur eating a carrot

a little boy dressed as a cardinal

clean image adversarial image a sign that reads no entry in front of a building