

HOW TO USE ICONIC IMAGE ILLUSTRATION TO INCREASE SELLING VALUE OF FICTION WORKS

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find out how to use iconic images illustration to increase selling value of fiction works. The theoretical basis of this research was visual communication design, illustration, color, and semiotics. The method used in this research was qualitative research by doing interviews with experts who are experienced in publishing and illustration field. Another method used was observing children and fiction books which use iconic image illustration to attract consumer's interest in order to increase books sales. The results of this study show that fiction books with iconic image illustration images have the positive response from consumers who show their interest and desire to buy them. Moreover, these results are expected to be useful for the creative industry, especially the sub-sector publishing industry when designing illustrations to be used in a book.

Keywords: *iconic image illustration, selling values, fiction works*

INTRODUCTION

Along with the growing potential of creative industries in Indonesia, the book industry in Indonesia continues to grow each year. Data from the Indonesian Publishers Association (IKAPI) shows there are 33.199.557 copies of the book sold in Indonesia throughout 2013. Based on that data, the following categories contribute to the greatest book sales numbers in Indonesia; Fiction/Literature (adults, children) book is 36%, Religion book is 13%, Education (lessons) book is 13%, References and Dictionaries is 9%, others book is 31%. The last category (Others) consists of various categories that also contribute significantly to the sales numbers, each contributing approximately 2% to 5%. They are Business and Economy, Computers and Internet, Self-Development (Motivation), Social Sciences, Food, and Agriculture (Profession/Hobby).

Based on that data, it can be seen that there is a huge growth in the world of books, especially in the field of fiction. This causes a tight competition between publishers, especially in bookstores where publishers compete directly to attract consumers' attention. According to a simple survey conducted by Goodreads.com by questioning readers for a reason to buy a new novel, most of the answers are because they are interested in its cover. Indeed, we often hear the proverb 'Don't judge a book by its cover'. This figuration actually shows the wisdom that people should not judge others only by their appearance. However, it also implies the underlying meaning of the proverb denotatively, that there are still many people who buy a product, including buying books, because they attracted to its cover design.

The statement above is not without foundation. From the results of the interviews done with expert users in publishing (editor, illustrator) and extreme users (reviewers, book bloggers), it is known that all elements on the front cover of a book should be carefully designed in order to raise consumers' interest. As a packaging, the front cover plays an important role in influencing the

perception of potential customers toward the content of the book (Gunawan, Hagijanto, & Pratama, 2014).

The intensity of book publishing and book sales competition in stores makes publishers think thoroughly about all aspects before publishing and selling a manuscript in the market. The manuscript must go through various processes before it is published. These processes, namely design planning process, involve authors, editors, and illustrators as image providers.

One of the main elements in designing the front cover of a book is the illustration. Ross (1963) said that as a packaging element, illustration is not merely a picture enhancer to provide elements of aesthetics only, but also a visual communication element that serves to stimulate and attract potential customers. It has also been observed in bookstores that majority of fiction books, especially those geared toward teenagers and children, make use of illustration as its cover. Therefore, illustration can be a part of the process of a book's fate because book cover has become one of the main factors that affect consumers' decision in selecting books in stores. Besides the cover, illustrations are also often displayed in a book's content pages. Illustrations in content pages have a very significant role as a media to help raise the readers' feelings and enhance the understanding of the book's content. Illustration in novels can help young readers to visualize the scenes in the books they read (Mulcahy & Samuels, 1987).

The purpose of this study is to determine how to use iconic image illustration to increase selling value of fiction works. Therefore, the researcher has examined a set of children's and fiction books with iconic image illustration, relating them to sales that attract customers to make a purchase. Referring to the background of the problems that have been described, the problem statement in this research designated as the research subject is How to use iconic image illustration to increase selling value of fiction works?

METHODS

This research uses descriptive research design which does not particularly emphasize on meaning. On the contrary, the emphasis is on descriptive while analyzing more on the data surface and only paying attention to the processes of a phenomenon occurrence rather than the depth or meaning of the data. Qualitative descriptive research, according to Mayer & Greenwood in Silalahi (2009), refers solely to the identification of characteristics that distinguish or characterize a group of humans, objects, or events. Qualitative descriptive involves the conceptualization process and generates the formation of classification schemes. This qualitative descriptive research explains how to use iconic image illustration to increase the selling value of children's and fiction books. The researchers researched natural settings and let the observed events flow without controlling the object. The observation was done only through subjective or interpretive approach.

The type of data in this research is the interview (in-depth interview) in the form of qualitative data. This data is collected in the form of words or verbal statements, opinions, attitudes, motives, trust perception, behavior, facts, attributes, and knowledge of how to use illustration to increase the selling value of children's and fiction books. The source of the data is the primary data which is obtained from the answers given by the speakers from the interview. The primary data is in the form of statements, interpretations, activities, and observations conducted by the interviewees on the topic of using illustrations to increase the selling value of children's and fiction books. The data analysis is done by collecting data and images based on literature and Internet access. The interview is done by interviewing with Nicholas Filbert (cover illustrator for Harry Potter Indonesian edition) and Ren Puspita (Indonesian book blogger and reviewer). Lastly, the secondary data is the data obtained from

experts, literature, library, newsletters, and Internet. These data are directly related to the information on how to use illustrations to increase the selling value of children's and fiction books, which are also the objects and formation of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (Pusat Bahasa Depdiknas, 2008), the word 'publisher' is derived from the word 'publish'. The word 'publish' itself implies to release (on newspapers, books, etc.), while the word 'publisher' means the person or company that publishes books, magazines, etc. Initially, publication only consisted of printing, which was an activity of manufacturing and had not been functioning as a distributor. The publisher only started acting like its current function in the 19th century, namely as a promoter of printed words.

World of printing and publishing continues to grow, both the scope of the work as well as the supporting equipment. In the world of publishing, more and more types of books are getting published in various languages and shapes and distributed in different countries. Due to the wide variations of books, there are publishers who specialize in publishing certain books such children's books, fiction books or school textbooks.

To attract potential buyers' interest, books need to be designed specifically based on their own type. In the world of books, besides publishers and printing, there is also the book designer. They are responsible for making sure the book's appearance looks attractive and represents its content accordingly. In developed countries, the publication of books can be done by several companies. For instance, there are companies that specialize in preparing manuscripts, designing books, organizing and reproducing manuscripts, printing, binding, promoting, distributing, and selling books; each having their respective duties in publishing a book. However, in Indonesia, all the work of publishing, designing, and printing are generally still managed in one or two companies only.

The publisher is one of the businesses that can be categorized into the creative industry sector. The creative industry is an industry that brings together art, culture, business, and technology, i.e., an industry that consists of the creation process, production, and distribution of goods and services created by intellectual property (United Nations, 2008).

Based on the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (Pusat Bahasa Depdiknas, 2008), fiction is a story that is not based on the reality, rather only on the author's imagination or thought. Fiction or popular fiction is a genre used to categorize book types for marketing purposes (Wilkins, 2012). There are also two categories of fiction; children's fiction and adult fiction.

Children's fiction is a literature category marketed for children; usually seen from the storyline and the grammar used (Kurniawan, 2009). According to Nurgiyantoro (2005), children's literature is a literary work that can be understood by children psychologically and emotionally. Children can also associate their life experiences with the story presented in those books. In addition, children's literature is generally based on concrete facts and easily imaginable. Another expert, Sarumpaet (2010) argued that children's literature is literature that children can read with guidance and direction from their parents or family. Based on these experts' opinions, it can be concluded that children's literature is a literary work which tells the world of children that is represented using simple grammatical language to easily be understood and imagined by children up to 12-13 years old of age. The categories included in this part are non-fiction books and novels for teenagers, board books, children songbooks, recognizing alphabetical books, mathematics learning books, picture storybooks, and picture book to learn about reading and concept.

On the other hand, adult fiction is a literary work that tells the story of complicated human life and sometimes written using more complex language and content. In general, the literature tells about adult romance, social disparities, or other complicated issues (Cantini, 2013). For example, *Bumi Manusia*, a novel by Pramudya Ananta Toer, is not appropriate to be read by children because they still have simple-minded thinking. Another comparison between the two kinds of literature is how there are more illustrations in children's books than adult literature books. Illustrations are very important in a child's reading, and it is also a unity with the story. That is because children who are still learning how to read particularly pay attention to the pictures in a book. Consequently, children's books could contain only pictures and no words.

In this case, it can be concluded that adult literature and children's literature have different consumer targets. Children's literature is made with simple contents for them to understand it easily, while adult literature is made with more complex contents for adult reading (Hasanah, 2012). This consumer target differences result in the different grammatical use in children's literature and adult literature. Children's literature is written in simple language whereas adult literature in complex language. Besides, in terms of storyline, stories in children's literature usually take inspiration from small events that can be observed in everyday life and contain simple moral lessons. An example is the story of *Kancil Mencuri Timun*. Due to children's simple mindset, the author presents a plot that is easy to understand in order to help children understand the essence of the story easily.

One of adult literature works is novel. According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (Pusat Bahasa Depdiknas, 2008), the novel is a long prose composition which contains series of stories of one's life with people around him/her by emphasizing the character and nature of each subject. Meanwhile, Tarigan (2011) stated that novel is a story with a plot that is long enough to fill a book or more. Therefore, according to its definition, the novel is a fiction book consisting of characters, dialogue, action, and an ongoing plot which aims to entertain the reader (Streit & Stefanie, 2016).

In order to understand about fiction cover design, first is necessary to understand about visual communication design. According to Umar Hadi in Pranajaya, Margana, and Wahyudi (2015), visual communication design is the expression of ideas and messages from the designer to the public through symbols in the form of images, colors, and text. In communicating, it is necessary to have a sufficient amount of knowledge about who the target aims to be and what the best way to communicate with them is. The better and comprehensive our understanding of these matters the easier it will be to create a communicative visual language (Limandoko, 2000).

From another perspective, visual communication design is a study which learns about the concept of communication and creative visual expression. These concepts will then be applied to various visual communication media by making use of graphic design elements, namely; letters, colors, compositions, and images or illustrations (Aprianti, 2013). The illustration itself comes from the Latin language, *illustrate*, which means to explain or describe with the media images. Design and visuals can provide more value in a book as for how illustrations provide an explanation of actions that are translated into words, and vice versa (Hunt, 2005). The illustration is not merely an ornament to attract the audience. The illustration also functions as a visualization medium of the idea and message to be delivered. Therefore, illustration is a visual appeal to deliver the message in a book to the observer in order to help the message be understood clearly (Hartanto, 2001).

Illustration on a book cover, when designed well, can become an effective design tool. That is because illustrations can provide a strong visual impression and increase the appeal to consumers. Many consumers see the visual first before reading the text. Hence, illustrations can be assumed as the first appeal seen by consumers when they are selecting books in stores (Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2012).

Visual communication design delivers a message to the target audience in the form of a sign. There are two types of signs: verbal and visual signs. The verbal sign usually comes in the form of language, writing style, theme, and obtained definition. On the other hand, the visual sign can be seen from its visualization, whether it is iconic, indexical or symbolic. Semiotics is the study of signs, especially those to convey information and make it communicative. The existence of these signs can replace something else (Tinarbuko, 2003). Semiotics serves as a tool to give awareness and understanding of the existence of everything. Therefore, the sign is present to make something efficient. This certainly also applies to visual signs on a book's cover as it has a fairly complex function of the motivation level of people to see, read, and even market, in which successful rate is deeply affected by the efficiency of these signs.

Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, the triangle meaning theory, with its categorical system is precisely used in producing works. Semiotics in Peirce's view is an action, influence, or cooperation of three subjects, namely sign, object, and interpreter (Nöth, 1990). Considering the symbols in a picture book, the authors can first foreground the sign in the triadic relation. The sign is, in part, the string of textual cues which guide the reader in constructing the interpretant. In this view, the sign is connected to the ground or grammar which enables it to mean something (Peirce, 1955). The grammar of the picture book is reflected in the arrangement of words (symbols) and images (icons). When a picture book is read to children, oral performance and instructional cues are woven together, thereby creating a multi-layered system of intersecting cues. Cues which contribute to the ground of the sign are discussed below.

The triangle of meaning theory explores the question of how meaning gets conveyed through a sign when people use it for communicating. According to Peirce, a form of the sign is the word. Moreover, an object is also something that is often seen as a sign. On the other hand, interpretation is a sign that comes into someone's mind about the object being referred to as a sign. If the three elements interact in someone's mind, the meaning gets conveyed as something that is represented by that sign (Tinarbuko, 2003).

On each book cover, generally there are two important elements, namely story and book identity. The identity of the book consists of title of the book, author's name, publisher, and age category (children's books, teen novels, and adult novels) (Gunawan, Hagijanto, & Pratama, 2014). Stories are usually imprinted on the back of a book, commonly called a synopsis or blurb. Meanwhile, the book identity should be posted on the front cover of the book. According to Heuer (2013), the front cover of a good book is one that can provide information about the book.

The design elements of the book cover should be a concern, especially if it is for children's books and teen fiction books. General guidelines to be noticed in designing book covers for children or teenagers, divided into cover and illustration, are as follows. For cover: (1) the cover is attractive, using enough color (not too much or too little), (2) the title is clear enough to describe the contents, but not too long for it to still raise curiosity. For illustration: (1) the size of the illustration is sufficiently large and the object is clearly illustrated, (2) not too full and crowded (3) the illustrations used are able to attract readers to find out the contents of the book, (4) illustrations are able to explain and enrich the contents, (5) the text or captions that may accompany the illustrations are written well and adequately (Stephens, 2008). It can be seen in Figure 1.

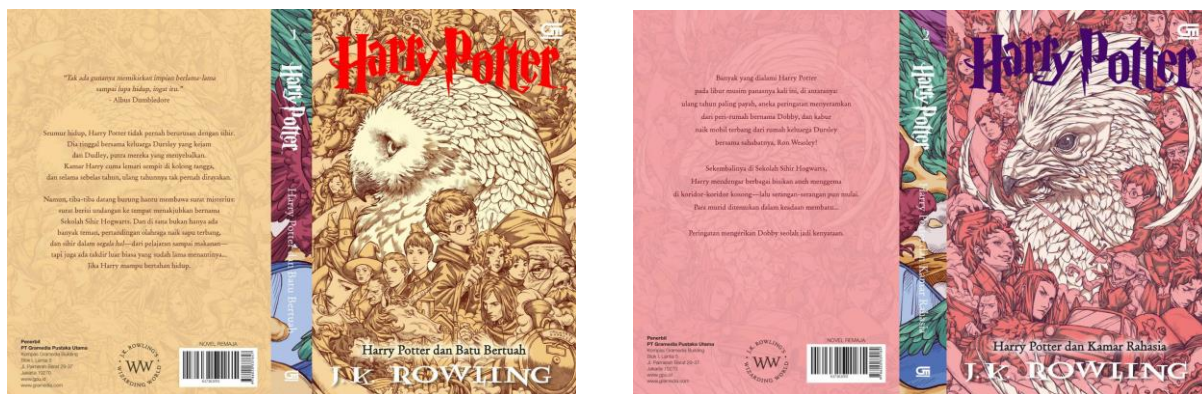


Figure 1 New Illustration for Harry Potter Indonesian Edition
(Source: Gramedia Pustaka Utama)

Aside from illustrations, color usage also has a psychological effect toward individual who sees it for it can stimulate emotions. If applied together with appropriate visual symbols, color is a very effective design element to influence consumers' perception. Color and its meaning have a great influence on something it adheres to, and it also gives meaning to an object. Almost all nations in the world have their own meaning in color. This can be seen in their national flag respectively, as well as other ritual ceremonies (Ikawira, Fianto, & Sutrisno, 2014).

Color has the ability to communicate many things to someone. People often use colors to show their emotional atmosphere, taste, political affiliation, and perhaps even their religious beliefs. Color could be used to create the impression and cause certain effects. Linschoten & Mansyur (2007) psychologically described that color is not a symptom that can only be observed but it also affects behavior and plays an important role in aesthetic judgment as well as determines one's like or dislike on various objects.

Someone liking a color and reacting under consciousness is part of human psychology. The color target can be achieved through many ways such as (1) Physiological response; colors can attract attention although the message that is delivered is neutral. This way, color can create sales by the appeal of impulse on the sales store. (2) The psychological response, color can help express warmth, coldness, quality, heart, and other emotions because the color is based on human nature. Colors can also convey the impression of seasons like spring, summer, and other desired feelings. (3) The appeal on senses, color can add dimensions and realism on products whose appearance is not ready to be delivered without color. (4) The appeal on emotions, colors can deliver pleasure and enhance appearance. However, it needs to be reassured that this will increase sales. (5) Color is one of the potential tools in the selling process because it appears to the eyes and encourages purchase with the right color usage. The color function in a packaging is to attract attention. However, sales depend on the brain's interpretation of the selected message and style. In selling a product, color's psychological side will affect human emotions and drive the emotions to take purchasing action (Danger, 1992).

Other than illustrations and color, typography is also an important part of a book cover design. Typography is the art and skill in designing, organizing, and composing letters. Typography can be found on the cover of books, either as a book title or other design elements (Fatimatuzzahrah, Patriansyah, & Aryanto, 2016). Typography is part of the language-related design. The letter is the most basic thing in communicating. When designing a letter, one must consider the size, weight, distance, and type of letter. These traits are often known as legibility, and it is often misunderstood and ignored by designers. Legibility is the achievement in controlling the quality and attributes that exist in typography to make it readable. These attributes or ornaments should be made in such a way that the

typography is still readable (Carter *et al.*, 2014). However, legibility cannot be explained scientifically as people's opinions about types of fonts are different with each other (Design Museum, 2010).

Every element in the book cover, both illustrations and typography, must be placed appropriately. Thus, the designer must pay attention to the hierarchy of each element interest in order to determine the size and position of the elements when arranging a book cover. Proper layout arrangement can produce a form of harmonization (Soedarso, 2014). According to Ambrose & Harris (2007), the layout is the organization of design elements on a blank field to form an artistic arrangement. The layout can also be called form and field management. The main purpose of the layout is to present images and text elements as communicative as possible to make readers easily receive the information presented.

According to Mayer (2009), the characteristics of effective book-based multimedia presentation are: (1) Consists of text and illustration (multimedia), (2) Text and illustrations related should be presented adjacently and not apart (integrated), (3) The presented material must use only the essence of cause-effect explanation, and (4) Includes a series of illustration frame with the structured explanation.

As explained by Nicholas Filbert as the cover illustrator for Harry Potter Indonesian edition in our interview, the illustrations on the book cover can represent the overall feeling of that book. One can also directly know about the target audience of that book based on the illustration style of the illustrated cover. Meanwhile, Ren Puspita, who is a blogger and reviewer of Indonesian book, explained through interviews that she prefer to read novels which use illustration as its cover. Her reason is because they have more illustrations and that makes the book more interesting, especially ones that represent the characters. According to Puspita, a book that only uses the letter layout gives the boring impression. It can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2 New Illustration for Harry Potter Indonesian Edition
(Source: Gramedia Pustaka Utama)

Besides synopsis of the story, there is no doubt that the first thing that is scored when someone sees a book is the visual display or the cover of the book. Therefore, the book's visual appearance should be made as attractive as possible in order to attract the attention of potential book buyers. An attractive book cover will drive a potential buyer to see and take that book. In order to make an attractive visual appearance, one way is to use a good illustration. That illustration must be appealing, expressive, appropriate to the story setting, and capable of visualizing the scenes in the story. In the

case of the fictional book cover, iconic image illustration is preferable. In semiotics, icons are signs that are similar to the object they represent (Limandoko, 2000). Thus, iconic image illustration is a drawing of the object that looks similar to the real object; or similar to the objects described by the authors in fictional books.

For example, in Nicolas' version for Harry Potter, he chose to illustrate the characters and fantastic beasts known by Harry Potter readers. Nicolas depicted the characters and creatures as similar as possible with the novel description.

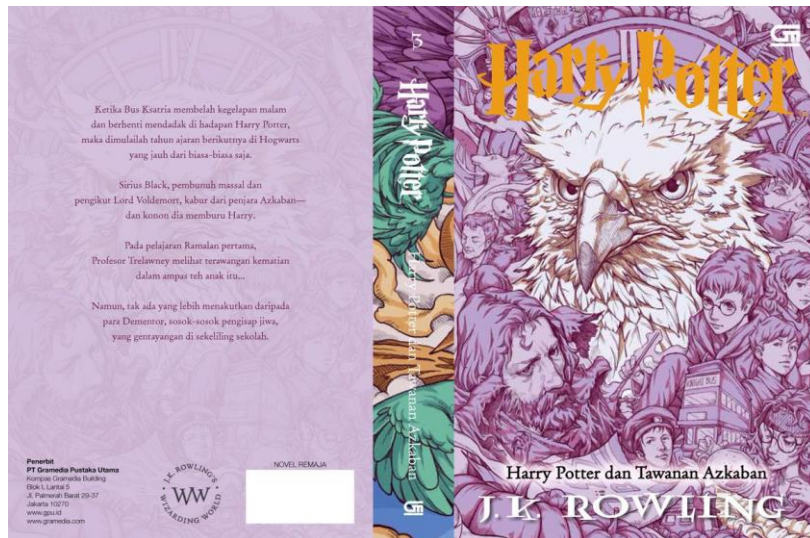


Figure 3 New Illustrations for Harry Potter Indonesian Edition
(Source: Gramedia Pustaka Utama)

As seen in Figure 3, Nicolas illustrated the cover for *Harry Potter dan Tawanan Azkaban* with one fantastic beast and several key characters that are featured in the story. The fantastic beast drawn is Buckbeak the Hippogriff. In the book, Buckbeak is described as a magical creature that has the front legs, wings, a head of a giant eagle, along with the hind legs and tail of a horse as a body. In this example, it is clear that Nicolas chose to do an iconic image representation of Buckbeak by drawing Buckbeak's headshot with the similar likeness to a giant eagle, as for how the creature is depicted in the book. Since Buckbeak also holds an important role in the story, he is prominently featured in the center of the cover. Other characters like Sirius Black, Professor Lupin, Professor Trelawney, Ron, Hermione, Harry himself, and other items such as the Knight Bus, Wands, the Crystal Ball, and the Patronus Charms are respectively featured in this cover with the similar likeness to their descriptions in the book.

Generally, pictured information is preferred compared to written information, because looking at a picture is much easier and simpler. An image, if chosen correctly, can worth a thousand words. Moreover, images are individually capable of attracting attention (Afuwwa & Patiria, 2015).

These results show that the design of the front cover has elements of good design, combining color, icon image, and typography to construct information as well as a first mean of communication with consumers. Color can be used as a catcher and also as a medium that conveys information through the existing color psychology. Typography is used to write titles, synopsis, and other information that can explain the novel. Icons or signs are illustrated similarly to the object it represents for the consumers to be interested in buying the book.

In this analysis, the role of psychological factors that influence consumers' buying interest is to pique their interests when looking at the front cover of the book illustrations. Consumer behavior can be influenced by providing stimuli that are provided by illustration, which will increase buying interest. For book cover designers, the process of design elements in such a way can be used as a factor affecting consumer appeal.

CONCLUSIONS

As it has been acknowledged, the largest book sales contributor in Indonesia is the fiction book. The analysis that has been done during the research is on how to use illustration to increase the selling value of fiction works, especially children's books, and teenage novels. From its results, it can be concluded that making children's books and teenage novels attractive to books enthusiasts require a long and uneasy process (Limandoko, 2000). Based on those explanations, illustration in a book cover plays a very important role in making communication effective. Furthermore, there are information or messages that are deliberately used by communicators (author/illustrator) to be delivered or transmitted to the communicants (the audience/reader) by using picture language.

A good illustration is combined with good design application, for instance, a neat and dynamic layout, the use of colors, typography, and ornaments appropriate to the story theme will create a harmonious union. However, the key to successfully increasing a book's sales is not only the content and attractiveness of the cover but also the right targeted promotional techniques. Choosing the right media will help to achieve this. Moreover, accurate data is also needed to find out more about the customers' interest. This data can be obtained through surveys or interviews. From there, it can be concluded and figured about what kind of iconic image illustration is desired by the audience. The results of the survey can be then be used as a reference that will facilitate the process of designing book cover illustration.

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