



## Anatomical construction of book covers by indie publishing houses in Yogyakarta

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### ABSTRACT

Changes upon changes in anatomical elements on book covers are common in the publishing industry. However, changes in anatomical elements have always been read as meaningless. This research aims to describe the meaning of changes in the anatomy of book covers in indie publishers in Yogyakarta. This research method uses deconstructive qualitative analysis using book anatomy concepts from experts, including Michael Bhaskar. The results of this study show three patterns of change construction. First is layout construction. This layout-based anatomical change uses a templateable technique that attracts the reader's attention. Second, colour construction: This design pattern was applied to publishers who thought white could be a publication's identity. Third, construction of totality: This last part is a significant finding because of all the anatomical elements used by mainstream publishers; there is one publisher that negates the existence of critical anatomical elements that are not used, namely ISBN.

**Keywords:** *changes in cavity anatomy, indie book, Yogyakarta publisher*

### ABSTRAK

Perubahan demi perubahan elemen anatomi pada kaver buku lazim terjadi di industri penerbitan. Namun, sejauh ini perubahan elemen anatomi tersebut selalu dibaca sebagai sesuatu yang nirmakna. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan maksud perubahan anatomi kaver buku pada penerbit Indie di Yogyakarta. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan analisis kualitatif dekonstruktif dengan memanfaatkan konsep-konsep anatomi buku dari para pakar termasuk Michael Bhaskar. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan tiga pola konstruksi perubahan. Pertama, konstruksi tata letak; perubahan anatomi yang berbasis pada tata letak ini bertujuan untuk memanfaatkan teknik templateable yang berusaha untuk menarik perhatian pembaca. Kedua, konstruksi warna; pola desain ini diambil dan diterapkan pada kaver-kaver yang mengaggap bahwa warna putih dapat menjadi identitas sebuah penerbitan. Ketiga, konstruksi totalitas; bagian yang terakhir ini menjadi salah satu temuan yang signifikan karena dari seluruh elemen anatomi yang digunakan oleh penerbit mainstream terdapat satu penerbit yang justru menegasikan adanya elemen anatomi penting yang tidak dipakai yaitu ISBN.

**Kata Kunci:** *perubahan anatomi kaver, buku indie, penerbit Yogyakarta*

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## INTRODUCTION

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Humans are naturally drawn to visuals. A visually appealing book cover can present a dilemma between purchase and rejection in a crowded market environment with numerous choices. A standout cover with a unique design can capture the attention of potential buyers, allowing them to make spontaneous purchase decisions based on the first visual impression, even when they have no prior knowledge of the book's content. An attractive cover not only makes a book look good but also serves as a powerful marketing tool. When a book can draw an audience's attention from afar, it is more likely that the audience will pick it up from the store shelf (Schneller, 2015; Bassoe, 2017).

The book cover is the primary lure used by publishing institutions. Therefore, a strong cover can create an emotional association with the brand established by the publisher or author. When readers have a positive experience with a work from a specific author or publisher, they will likely seek other works from the same brand (Evarherhe, 2015; Luna, 2019). A book cover with a consistent style can reinforce this positive association and increase reader loyalty to the brand.

This also poses a challenge for publishers operating within the small industry sector. The presence of numerous publishers identifying themselves as indie (independent publishing houses) targets a more specific readership than the general public by presenting book covers that avoid commonality. Indie publishers are not just living within the small industry but act as an antithesis to major publishing houses, which are often seen as "predatory" and indiscriminate in their tastes (Flood, 2016; Potts et al., 2017; Bgoya, 2014; Prescott, 2020).

Book publishers must survive digitalisation by presenting book covers that captivate the reader's eye. The reduction in print runs and online sales of printed books also contributes to delaying the twilight of publishing, especially for indie publishers. Digitalisation is no longer viewed as a threat; publishers need to become part of this digital shift (Bhaskar, 2013), for example, by selling digital books (e-books); see Kakatua Publishing, Yogyakarta.

Today's publishing atmosphere can no longer avoid digitalisation. The biggest challenge in publishing today is presenting quality books and cultivating quality readers. Publishers strive to continuously build reader preferences to enhance critical thinking among the youth. These efforts, particularly in the context of indie publishers, aim to break the common sense anatomy of books prevalent in the publishing industry (Kornell et al., 2022). Yogyakarta has become a hub for book workers who enjoy experimenting by diverging from the conventional anatomy of books, mainly book covers. An example of a Yogyakarta-based publisher with such experimental intentions is Daun Malam.

Previous research in Indonesia focusing on book cover design has analysed aspects such as proportion, balance, contrast, rhythm, and unity using Tom Lincy's theories (Negara, 2022) and has explored visual creativity and aesthetics through the use of overlap techniques (Selina & Dini, 2024). Additionally, research focusing on rhetorical design to utilise effects on design objects was conducted by Schneller (2015). Similarly, Prescott (2020) focused on modernism among small industry publishers and magazines. Among the existing research, this study aims to trace the anatomical changes in book covers of books published by indie publishers in the Yogyakarta region.

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## METHOD

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This research employs a qualitative deconstructive analysis, utilising the book anatomy concepts of experts, including Michael Bhaskar's concept of publishing from print to digital. Data collection involved listing publishers in Yogyakarta operating within the small industry sector. From this listing, the next step was to classify several complete and incomplete anatomical covers based on the consistency of these categories maintained by the publishers. The subsequent method was data sampling, which included publishers such as Daun Malam, Pojok Cerpen Group, Kakatua, and Bening Rua Aksara. All are located in Yogyakarta and publish works in different genres.

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## RESULT & DISCUSSION

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### Result

Results and discussion can be written separately. The Results and Discussion sections can be combined for authors who find it necessary. This section should constitute approximately 65% of the entire article. The article may include tables and figures.

The tables and figures presented must be referenced in the text. As shown in Sungging, the format for tables and figures is illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 1 below. Table 1 explains the various style names used in this article's template, while Figure 1 explains the distribution of word counts for each section as prescribed in Sungging.

*Table 1. The pattern of Cover Anatomy Changes*

Publisher	Front Cover Anatomy	Hind Cover Anatomy	Construction Pattern
<i>Daun Malam</i>	Illustration, Title, Author's Name, Edition/Series Description	Synopsis, Publisher's Logo, Publisher's social media	Do not use ISBN. Reduced anatomy.
<i>Pojok Cerpen Group</i>	Illustration, Title, Author's Name	Synopsis, Expert/Media Comments, Publisher's Logo, ISBN, Publisher's social media	Do not use additional information about the author—reduced anatomy.
<i>Kakatua</i>	Illustration, Title, Author's Name	Author's Photo, Author's Quote, Synopsis, Introductory and closing information, Publisher's Logo, ISBN, Publisher's Information, Genre Information	Using all the anatomy instruments in the book,
<i>Bening Rua Aksara Group</i>	Illustrations, Title, Subtitle, Author's Name, Name of Foreword, Bestseller Description, Revised Edition Description	-	Using all the anatomy instruments in the book.

### Discussion

#### Layout Construction

Sejak Since its inception, Kakatua has consistently produced cover designs with a similar template style. This type of cover is prevalent among large and small publishers, as it is perceived to have a more modern appearance (Prescott, 2020). In Kakatua's cover designs, the position of the author's name, book title, images/paintings/illustrations, publisher's logo, and other elements remain in the same place, regardless of the genre of the published books. Kakatua publishes both fiction and non-fiction, as well as domestic and international works. However, for the latter, the publisher only releases works by its owner, Gita Karisma, in Indonesian. Titles by Gita Karisma include "*Dongeng Binatang*" and "*Eksperimen Faust*."

Like previous cover designs, non-translated works follow the same style pattern, which applies to front and back covers. The back cover design includes the author's photo, a quote from the book, a synopsis, foreword and afterword notes, the publisher's logo, ISBN, genre information, and the publisher's social media details.

Regarding its anatomy, Kakatua creates covers based on the standard anatomical instruments major publishers use. The difference lies in the placement of foreword and afterword information; major publishers typically place these on the front cover for a persuasive impact on readers, whereas Kakatua places them on the back cover. The consistency of this cover style can be seen in Picture 1.



Picture 1. Front and back cover design of a cockatoo.  
Source: <https://penerbitkakatua.com/>

Kakatua has the potential to make its covers more persuasive, for instance, by leveraging the cover in Figure 1, featuring Ernest Hemingway, a Nobel Prize-winning author. His novel *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) has been published by various Indonesian publishers, such as Serambi Ilmu Semesta (2009), Narasi (2015), and Liris (2013). Serambi Ilmu Semesta and Liris include cover annotations about the book's awards, while Narasi opts to include a brief related quote.

As the latest publisher to release "*Lelaki Tua dan Laut*," Kakatua includes a foreword by Patrick Hemingway and an afterword by Sean Hemingway on the back cover. The choice of these annotations reflects a marketing strategy in which the inclusion of persuasive or formal annotations aims to attract buyers (Negara, 2022).

Bening Rua Aksara also uses the template cover design technique (see Picture 2). However, their approach differs from Kakatua's. Bening Rua Aksara utilises front cover anatomy elements such as title, author, and subtitle (or title note indicating the book's genre). Both publishers adopt a modern concept style (Prescott, 2020).



Picture 2. Front and back cover design from Bening Rua Aksara  
Source: <https://beningruapustaka.com/>

However, Bening Rua Aksara's consistent cover style applies only to specific genres, specifically literature, poetry, and stories. Other genres, such as textbooks, exhibit a more flexible design pattern, adapting to the book's theme, as seen in Picture 3.

The front cover anatomy in Figure 3 utilises all elements of front cover anatomy, including illustrations (1,2,3,4), titles (1,2,3,4), subtitles (1,2,3,4), author names (1,2,3,4), introducer names (1,2,3), bestseller annotations (3), revised edition notes (1), and additional subtitle annotations (3).



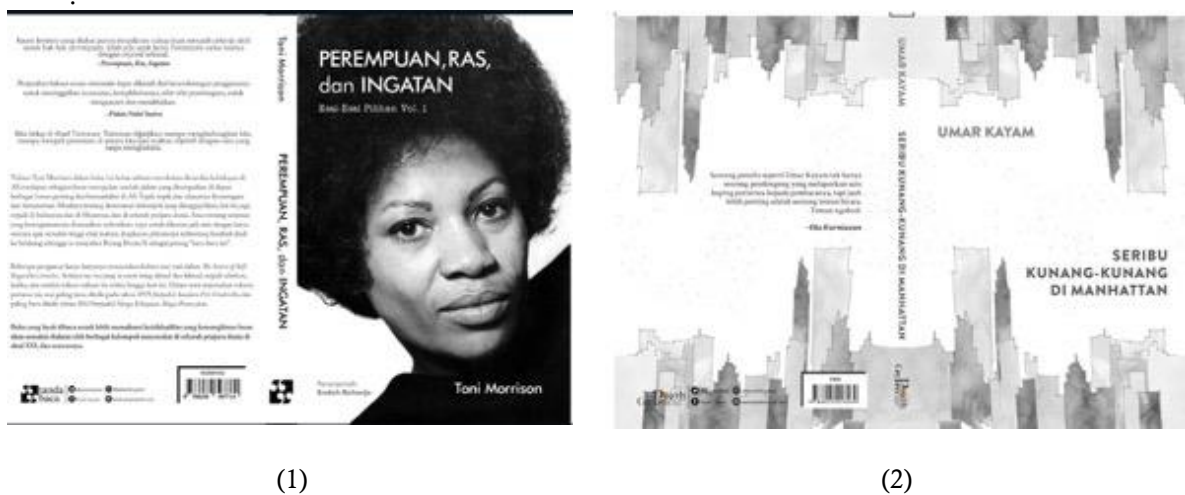


Picture 3. Front and back cover design from Bening Rua Aksara  
 Source: <https://beningruapustaka.com/>

### Color Construction

Pojok Cerpen Group does not employ a template design like Kakatua and Bening Rua Aksara. Instead, its design pattern uses white across all front and back covers. The use of a white background is an attempt by Pojok Cerpen Group to establish its publisher identity. The front and back cover anatomy elements are not fully utilised. The front cover anatomy, as seen in Figure 4, includes illustrations (1,2), titles (1,2), subtitles (1), and author names (1,2).

Moreover, Pojok Cerpen Group does not include a synopsis (2) of Umar Kayam's "*Seribu Kunang-Kunang di Manhattan*". More comprehensive anatomy elements are found in books (1; see also Figure 5 at (3) and (4)) by Toni Morrison, which includes a synopsis, expert or media comments, publisher's logo, ISBN, and publisher's social media details.



Picture 4. The front and back cover designs are from Pojok Cerpen Group.  
 Source: Editorial

Pojok Cerpen Group's non-fiction genre also uses this minimalist anatomy approach. The covers in Figure 5 could potentially include additional persuasive annotations, especially considering cover (1) is by Eka Kurniawan, author of "*Cantik itu Luka*" (2002), which has been translated into many foreign languages. Eka Kurniawan was also nominated for the 2016 Man Booker Prize for his novel "*Man Tiger*," translated from "*Lelaki Harimau*" (2004). Pojok Cerpen Group did not utilise this aspect to attract readers, a strategy commonly employed in the publishing industry (Schneller, 2015; Bassoe, 2017).



Picture 5. The front and back cover designs are from Pojok Cerpen Group.  
Source: Editorial

Similarly, cover (4) by Irfan Afifi could include a label noting "Author of the Bestselling Book 'Saya, Jawa, dan Islam,'" but Pojok Cerpen Group did not employ this strategy, unlike Bening Rua Aksara (see Figure 3) or by including the author's photo as Kakatua does (see Picture 1).

**Total Construction**

The anatomy of a book cover is an integral part that a publisher should not overlook. However, field observations reveal differences in books published by Daun Malam, as seen in Figure 6. The front cover anatomy includes illustrations (1,2), titles (1,2), author names (1,2), and edition/series notes (2). The back cover has a synopsis, the publisher's logo, and social media details.



Picture 6. Front and back cover design from Daun Malam  
Source: Editorial

An integral part often missing from standard book cover anatomy is the ISBN (International Standard Book Number) issued by the National Library. The function of ISBN registration is to assist in identifying and classifying books in libraries or bookstores. According to Kornell et al. (2022), book anatomy is a necessity that can be modernised.



(3)



(4)

Picture 7. Front and back cover design from Daun Malam  
Source: Editorial

Despite omitting essential elements like the ISBN, Daun Malam's totality in constructing book cover anatomy for each publication demonstrates a bold deviation from mainstream publishers. This omission may be due to Daun Malam's focus on domestic authors not requiring ISBN legalisation. This differs from Kakatua and Bening Rua Aksara, who, like major publishers, include all anatomical instruments on their covers.

Daun Malam's commitment to totality in cover design is notable, given the close-knit and aesthetically driven book ecosystem in Yogyakarta, which is susceptible to non-aesthetic interventions. Daun Malam opts for diverse design patterns instead of a uniform colour concept like Pojok Cerpen Group.

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## CONCLUSION

Cover anatomy elements are a strategic aspect of publishing, encompassing marketing and brand identity. This can be observed in the consistency employed by the respective publishers, Pojok Cerpen Group, Kakatua, Bening Rua Aksara, and Daun Malam. From a marketing perspective, these publishers have established a loyal reader segment, which can be discerned from the relationship between design and reader preferences.

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