

Stories Uncovered: An Exploration of Book Covers and Their Effects on Reader's Buying Habits

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Abstract

Despite the popular phrase “never judge a book by its cover,” as readers people tend to do exactly that. Even though the book itself may be very interesting and well written, if a book cover is not successfully well designed, many readers choose to ignore that book in favor of one with a more eye-catching cover. In addition to the book's cover, the book jacket can serve as a promotional piece for a book and its design can be equally as important in promoting and selling the book. As Nicole Matthews states in *Judging a Book By Its Cover*, “book jackets are a key conduit through which negotiations take place between authors, the book trade and readers” (Matthews et al, xi). Because of this, a book's cover and book jacket can be crucial in the success of the book itself. In order to design covers for books, one must understand the themes within each book as well as its essence. This will lead to the success or failure of the book cover design.

This thesis also explores the writing process for a short story. I will be exploring book cover design by creating a cover for an original story in addition to existing novels. In this story, I will discuss the topic of bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder has a huge impact on not only the life of the person diagnosed, but their friends and family as well. Through my story I will explore the issues people face when diagnosed with Bipolar disorder and how other people in their lives are affected by the illness.

Method

By analyzing the novels, I created book covers that would best reflect themes within the stories as well as appeal to the books' demographics. This was done with support from sources about book-related design.

To create my book covers, I combined this research with skills acquired in my design classes and incorporated my own photography into each cover.

For my short story, I read many books that would be in a similar genre as my story in order to get an idea of how to write for young adults. I also read a book that focused on a young girl writing a novel and gave insight into the writing process. I used research about bipolar disorder to accurately create a character in my original short story who struggles with this disorder. I used research about how bipolar disorder affects friends and family to create realistic situations, feelings, and events for the characters in my story.

Results: Book Covers

- Books are usually targeted to a specific market segment based on demographic factors
- Women read more than men and buy more books
- Cover imagery is important in positioning a book in the market
- Creating a consistent brand contributes to an author's success
- Covers also affect retailers: publishers have 1.5 minutes to sell an idea to a distributor
- Book jackets can be used as promotional tools to help sales
- Covers should connect with themes within the story

Introduction

No matter how much we tell readers not to judge a book by its cover, it happens. People look at a cover and are either interested in the potential contents of the book, or pass the book up for another option. This means publishers and authors must be conscious of how their books are designed and marketed toward specific groups in order to ensure the best success in terms of sales. Why are the covers important? Who are we designing for? They must answer these important questions to ensure the best sales possible.

These questions are being answered in order to support my thesis project to design book covers for both an original story and existing novels by Sarah Dessen.

In addition to research about book cover design, I had to research aspects of bipolar disorder in order to create believable characters for my short story. I wanted to ensure that I was creating realistic characters using accurate information about mental illness and its effects on those who are diagnosed as well as their families and loved ones.

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Results: Bipolar Disorder

- Signs of bipolar disorder: sudden changes in behavior, poor concentration, extreme arrogance, inappropriate anger, imaginary pains, inappropriate risk-taking, behavioral extremes, & excessive meddling
- There are 2 types of bipolar disorder-Bipolar I is more serious, Bipolar II has less intense manic episodes
- Manic episodes: rapid speech, high energy, & euphoria
 - Talking nonstop, nonsense
 - Going for days without sleep
 - Quickly changes from one idea/action to another
 - Euphoria can switch to anger/hostility rapidly
 - Manic thinking: believing you are much more than you are
- Estimated 40% of creative people are bipolar-use their highs and lows for artistic expression
- People with less social support are likely to have more issues
- Popular treatment: mood stabilizers, antidepressants, antipsychotics, sleep aids, & anti-anxiety drugs-must find right combination
 - Lithium: most frequently prescribed, used to stop mania
- Relationships: people keep their distance because of fear they may have another episode, canceling plans to take care of bipolar person's crisis, running errands/doing favors for them, spend time worrying about them, child feels more like parent
 - When treatment works: can be sensitive and wise parent, can be a creative mentor
 - Perspectives from real children: helpful, have good sense of humor, provide for their wants, sleeps into the day, anger issues, unpredictable moods, dependent on them, they fear they have the disorder
 - When treatment is partially/not working: children often feel like it's their fault, support groups/family support important for children