

Creative Brief: Improving Books.com.tw

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Background

Books.com.tw was established in 1995, and is one of the largest online book distributors in the Greater Chinese market. In addition to selling books and ebooks, the platform expanded into other e-commerce areas, offering diverse items like fashion, electronics, and food. In July 2025, it opened a physical store in Taipei.

As the name suggests, the company's primary platform is a website. However, because the platform offers a wide variety of products, the website is cramped with all the elements and advertisements it aims to display.

In Figure 1, two advertisements at the top of the site are bigger than the navigation bar. The big image blocks users from finding the login and shopping cart buttons.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Books.com.tw website. It includes links for Home, Tickets, Corporate Buying, Gift Card, Overseas, BKStore, Platinum, Order Inquiry, Shopping Cart (1), E-Bookshelf, and EN. Two large promotional banners are displayed above the navigation bar: one for iPhone Air and another for iPhone指定賣場享2% OPEN回饋. Below the navigation bar is a search bar with the placeholder "All" and a dropdown menu for categories like 童書中秋特輯. A search button and a "HOT" link are also present. To the right, there are more promotional banners for a 3% discount on purchases over \$1299.

Fig. 1 Top nav

In Figure 2, the English search filter (orange buttons) is not aligned to the “[search again]” row, it is unclear where these button belongs to. Also, the terms “Precise” and “Fuzzy” searching features are also not easily understood by users who are not developers.

The screenshot shows the search filter section of the Books.com.tw website. It includes filters for Category (Single Choice), Popularity Ranking, Launch Date, Price (Lowest Pri ~ Highest Pr), and search options like CONFIRM, Product Available, Name Contains this Key Word, and Pick-up At 7-11. The search results page shows a grid of book covers with titles like "9/5-11/30 萬有在我心中" and "新時代展 5折起".

Fig. 2 Search Filter

The product catalog in Figure 3 occupies nearly the whole page and cover up other content.

Although including most popular genres makes it easy for users to browse their catalog, the menu looks messy.

Figure 3 was captured from the English version of the site, yet only translated the word “Category” from the Traditional Chinese version, confusing users when they browse the site. Even though there's an overseas page with an English side menu, it is still directed towards the main, Chinese site.

Fig. 3 Site menu

Business Goals and Hypothesis

The improvement plan has four main goals: enhancing accessibility, expanding the audience, increasing page views, and improving brand image. Books.com.tw is often perceived as a blunt force overshadowing local physical and independent bookstores, yet their products were never described as aesthetically pleasing. Users visit for specific goals—to compare prices, and make purchase. The mechanical transaction experience lacks joy and exploration. If the browsing experience can bring pleasure to users, they might be more willing to explore new titles, and also attract new users. Therefore, it is important to improve the layout of the landing page and the (linguistic) accessibility of the site, so it can reach new audiences and bring the success of the business to a new level.

Audience & Competition

The target audience include book readers, and online shoppers in Taiwan. Though Books.com.tw ships overseas to 154 countries, it is still important to prioritize the local audiences, regardless of whether they are Chinese speakers. Not only do the general users need a smoother browsing experience, but the site should also be accessible to the international audience. This improvement plan focuses on enhancing accessibility, so as to create opportunities to reach new audience groups.

Eslite is the largest chained bookstores in Taiwan, and is renowned for the minimalistic design of the physical stores. Its e-commerce platform, Eslite Online (Figure 4), is a direct competitor for Books.com.tw, as it offers similar products, and has a nearly identical website layout. Even though Eslite uses a palette and site design that is more aesthetically pleasing compared to Books.com.tw, the site is only available in Traditional Chinese, instead of English options for the diverse communities in Taiwan. Our product differentiates itself by catering to audience who prefer multiple language options.



Fig. 4 Eslite Online

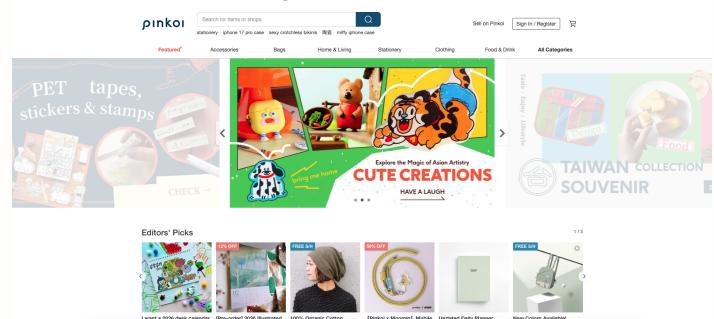


Fig. 5 Pinkoi

The second competitor is Pinkoi, it is a Taiwan-based e-commerce platform specializing in design goods. The website supports Traditional Chinese (for Taiwan and Hong Kong/ Macau), Simplified Chinese, English, Thai, and Japanese, reflecting its emphasis on the East Asian market. The color palette is also consistent and aligns to brand identity. Pinkoi and Book.com.tw compete in stationary and design product sales, though Books.com offers dynamic range product rather than a niche focus. Also, their business model differ: Pinkoi generates revenue through commissions and listing fees from designers, while Books.com.tw has dynamic revenue streams, including advertisements and commission-based sales.



Fig. 6 Pinkoi Pop-up icon

“How Might We” Statements

1. How might we highlight the books?
2. How might we make searching and browsing so easy that users feel excited using our site?
3. How might we simplify site elements?
4. How might we make the site look modern?
5. How might we make a site that every visitors can understand what we sell?

Mood board

The mood board condenses the visual ideas for this project—to be simplistic, natural, and content first. The images included are design samples from Taiwan and Japan to illustrate the intended style, palette, and typography for the new site. The balance of color, layout, and font are important to make different website element stand without visually overwhelming site visitors. For color shades, other than the green brand colors, the content of the new site will be in low saturated, pastel colors, which is less tiring to look at. I think making the site image-based instead of text-based can also balance the content density and the quantity of elements included, through representing major functions with icons (eg. hamburger menus). For the ‘Huninn’ font, it is an open-source font developed by a Taiwanese font company, justfont, and I think the round-cornered font can bring a cheerful image to the site.



Simple, Neutral, Content First

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