

Hello everyone.

From now on, I'd like to talk about

How can theme developers monetize in the era of Block Themes?



First of all,
My name is Ishikawa
I'm a WordPress theme
developer.



In 2012,
I released a general-purpose WordPress
theme in Japan.

In 2015
I published Theme Lightning on
wordpress.org

Lightning

By Hidekazu Ishikawa



Lightning is a very simple & easy to customize theme which is based on the Bootstrap. It is also very friendly with custom post types and custom taxonomies. When you add a new one, the breadcrumbs will be adjusted and posts will look beautifully without editing or adding a template files.

Preview

Download

Version: 15.2.4

Last updated: December 26, 2022

Active Installations: 80,000+

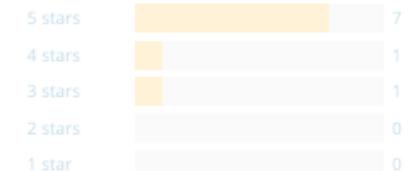
WordPress Version: 5.5 or higher

PHP Version: 5.6.0 or higher

Theme Homepage →

Ratings

★★★★★ 4.5 out of 5 stars.



Add my review

In 2022

I published Block theme X-T9 on
wordpress.org

I also make a living by developing and
selling theme extension plugins and
other plug-ins.

The screenshot shows the X-T9 WordPress Theme page on wordpress.org. At the top, there's a header with the theme name "X-T9" and "By Hidekazu Ishikawa". Below the header is a navigation bar with links for "About", "Service", "Design Sample", and "Information". To the right of the navigation are "Preview" and "Download" buttons, and a heart icon for favoriting. The main content area features a large image of a starry sky with mountains in the foreground. Overlaid on this image is the text "Let's embark on a new journey". Below this, there are four cards with placeholder text: "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.", "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.", "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.", and "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.". At the bottom left, there are four "Style Variation" boxes, each showing a different color scheme for the text "Aa :". On the right side, there's a "Ratings" section with a "See all >" link and a chart showing zero reviews for 5 stars, 4 stars, 3 stars, 2 stars, and 1 star. A "Add my review" button is at the bottom right.

like me, the business model of theme developers is

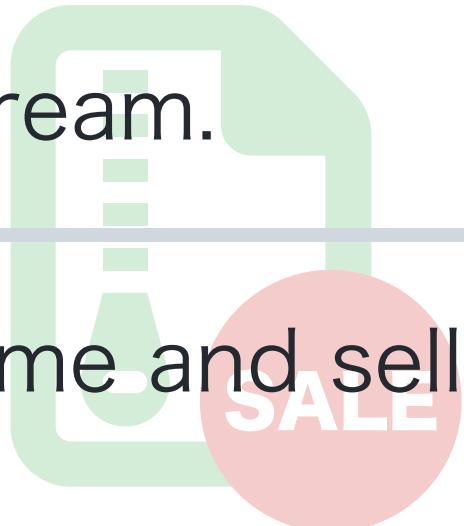
Create and sell

Premium Themes and Plugins

I think these were the mainstream.

We could simply create a theme and sell it as a zip file.

It was relatively possible to sell and make money.





**Points where
monetization has
become more difficult**

01

Traditional monetization
points become less
effective



Active theme
Lightning

Change

Site Identity

Colors

Background Images

Menus

Widgets

Theme developers
develop themes with unique editing
functions
and sell Premium themes

User can easily edit
Theme creators could get rewarded

Such a relationship existed and
there was one monetization point here

< Lightning >
WordPress Theme

Layout Control

Lightning has column control function that you can specific column number from "Appearance".
Customize > Lightning Layout Setting" and specific post edit screen.

However, in FSE,

Users can customize entire site with no code, just standard WordPress features.

This makes it much less dependent on the theme.



**Then as someone who made a
living out of theme sales...**

Monetization points disappeared.

(` ; ω ; `)

and it is

A matter of life and death

ill||li _|_ |○ ill||li

02

Decreased monetization
effect by original Block
features.



Early stage block editors had poor editing capabilities

so

We have developed original blocks with various adjustment functions and layouts,

and

Used them as added value.

Group

A block that groups other blocks

Color settings

Text Color



[Custom color](#)

Cle

Background Color

Solid Gradient



[Custom color](#)

Cle

Advanced

However, by the WordPress version upgrade...

- Advanced layouts are now possible with Core blocks and Block Patterns
- Similar functions have been added to the core blocks...

Again,



Monetization points
disappeared...

(` ; ω ; `)

In addition to

- Once released
Original blocks become an
ongoing maintenance burden

and

- It became necessary to
**keep a close watch on Gutenberg's
developments.**

03

CSS output by
WordPress became
quite complicated



Probably

Many theme & custom block
developers are facing this issue?

However,

It is inevitable in the evolution of
WordPress.

| T - T) .oO (I know)

In this way,

The area that theme developers have focused on for monetization is greatly influenced by FSE.

As a result, I feel

It has become difficult to monetize traditional "theme sales"

Future direction of theme-related business

How add value and differentiate?



First, we can consider

Differentiation by block patterns

As the easiest way

Selling themes and plugins that includes various block patterns.

However, as mentioned earlier

There is nothing that users cannot create on their own, so it is **weak as a point of monetization.**



The second is

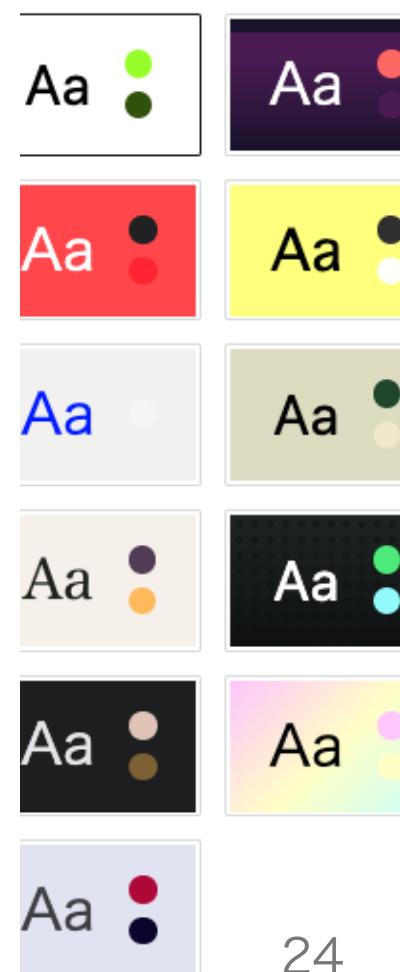
Differentiation by Global Styles variations.

It is a feature introduced in WordPress 6.0

This feature allows us to create different variations within a single theme.

Browse styles

Choose a different style combination
theme styles



These

Block Patterns / Global Style Variations are

Even general users can make it, but...

High quality products created by professional are naturally having high added value.

These are the new extensibility and monetization points that WordPress has provided.

In our case

Before FSE

We used to sell plugins
that extend the functionality of
the theme

However

- Expected to taper off due to less reliance on the theme
- Even if sell only the pattern, it seems to be difficult / because even users have the impression that they can make them on their own.

in addition to

- We have to move to block themes too

Therefore, currently

We are selling licenses with
Premium Patterns added

This configuration is

- **User can use both**
the classic theme and the new block theme
- **Keep existing users by the value of the Premium Patterns**
- **Acquire new users** through the value of our Premium Patterns

and the

Block Patterns is extremely important.

So,
we published our own
block pattern directory

This is a site similar to
the official pattern
directory.

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'Pattern Library' for WordPress Block Patterns. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Pattern Catalog, Usage Methods, and Account. A search bar is also at the top. The main title 'Copiable Block Patterns Library' is prominently displayed. Below it, a sub-section title 'Copiable Block Patterns Library' is shown. There are two buttons: 'View all patterns' and 'View usage methods'. A large search bar labeled 'Search' is centered below these buttons. To the right of the search bar, there's a dropdown menu for 'Usage Product' and a 'Search by category' input field. Below the search area, there are several examples of different pattern cards, each with a preview image, title, and a 'Copy' button. The patterns include 'Lunch Set Menu', 'Services Flowchart', 'Business CSS Customization', 'Follow-CTA', and 'Advertisement Click Position Block'. Each card has a 'View details' link and a 'Copy' button.

Why we created our own pattern directory?



Because

**Still difficult only with core
blocks,**

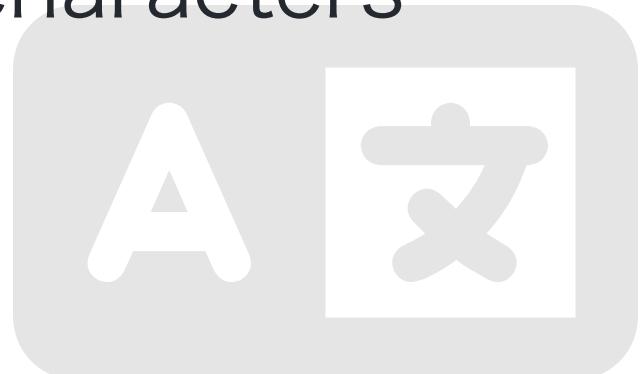
so

I wanted to use my own original blocks
to provide more practical patterns.

Practical Patterns can be motivates
people to purchase license.

Second, there is the
language problem

Characters look different in
English and double-byte characters





Pricing table

Buttons Columns Featured

For example

Even if
it looks not bad
in English but...

Copy pattern

Add to favorites

Default (960px)

Single	Family	Patron
Join our growing community.	Support special exhibitions.	Take support to the next level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">General admission and member discounts for one adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General admission and member discounts for two adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General admission and member discounts for two

Japanese



News Download & Extend Learn Community About



Get Started

価格表

Buttons Columns Featured

Copy Pattern

Default (960px)

in Japanese.
The balance is bad.

個人
成長するコミュニティをサポート。

- 大人1名の一般入場料と会員割引
- 特別展示ごとに1枚の無料チケ

ファミリー

特別展示を支援。

- 大人2名の一般入場料と会員割引
- 特別展示ごとに4枚の

後援者

次のレベルの支援。

- 大人2名の一般入場料と会員割引
- 特別展示ごとに5枚の無料チケ

The third is
the effect of theme style.
Even if user paste the .org pattern,
user need to make adjustments.

For us,
we need to make an effort to
get users to continue to license
even if the dependency of the theme
decreases.

then,

How to increase product value?



At first

Premium patterns

As the name suggests,

- This patterns available to only paying users.
- The design and sample sentences are more elaborate are ready to use.

Of course
we provide stylish and common
patterns but...

Actually,
Many non-profesional users...

- **Can't think about page structure** in the first step

and

- **They can't think of the sentences to write.**

Premium patterns

Therefore

We are Providing a block pattern to create whole page of a specific page for a specific industry.

サンプル工務店のこだわり



03 設計

安心して暮らせるために、全ての現場の地盤調査を実施しています。調査したデータをもとに最適な仕様をご提案させていただきます。

施工事例

There is

For the end user

They are Just rewrite the text
to suit their business.

for the

Commissioned creation

By using a pattern as a draft
of the page,
the **meeting with the client**
becomes smooth



When providing as a pattern for the entire page including sentences

- Must be in the language of the country / and
- A design optimized for each language is better / Furthermore
- Content and design trends vary by region

Localized versions also have the benefit of not competing with English-speaking developers.

Second

Favorite pattern registration function

This function allows users to register own favorite patterns and **easily recall them.**

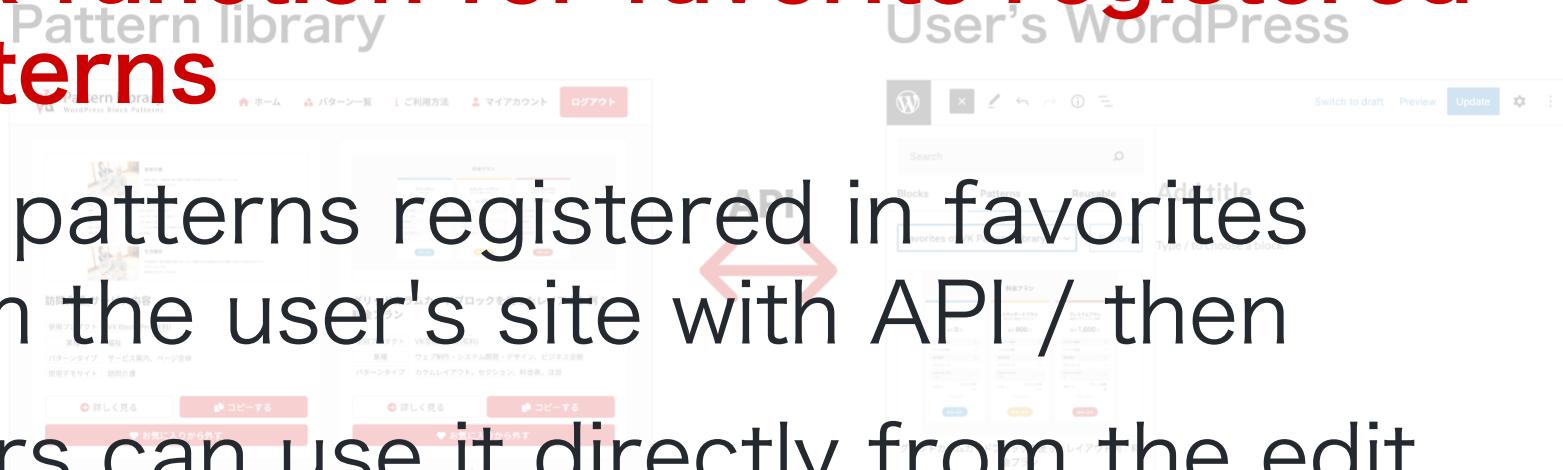


3rd benefit is

Link function for favorite registered patterns

Call patterns registered in favorites from the user's site with API / then

Users can use it directly from the edit screen of their site



Users can use it directly from the edit screen of their site



**About whether the
theme business is dead,**

I feel, after all,

Theme is important

Themes and patterns are closely related to the global styles,

Even if

bring in a partial pattern from outside and use it,

there are many cases where there is a problem with the uniformity of the design.

Even in the era of FSE

**Users need good themes and
highly practical patterns**

FSE is highly configurable and
customizable but,

too much configuration work.

Actually, it's quite cumbersome to
make from scratch

Responsive design compatibility

Additionally, the website must adapt to different screen sizes.

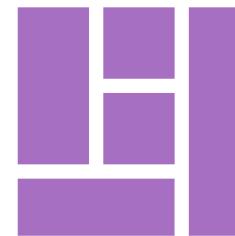
How to control display elements according to screen size?

- With a single screen width, it might be possible to lay out well somehow.
- However, when it comes to **layout on multiple width are actually not that easy.**

I feel it will be difficult to monetize the theme alone, but...

considering
it as A set with a **value-added
patterns** are

There will be many business
opportunities.



**Value-added
Patterns**

At the end

What do you think about future theme business?

Please share your opinion

 Twitter

#WCAsia @kurudrive / @kurudrivve_en

or

 Talk to me! (with simple words and short sentence)

Thank you