

WordCamp Asia 2023

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

Hidekazu Ishikawa

@kurudrive / @kurudrive\_en



# Who am I ? - Self introduction -

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## Hidekazu Ishikawa

-  kurudrive / kurudrive\_en
-  From Japan
-  Theme developer / CEO



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2012 First business WordPress theme release

# Lightning

By [Hidekazu Ishikawa](#)



2015

The screenshot shows the Lightning theme homepage. At the top, there's a banner with a photo of a child wearing ski goggles and a snowboard. Below the banner, the title "Johnijirou On Snow" and subtitle "Growing up everyday" are displayed, with a "READ MORE" button. Three circular icons represent features: "For all purposes" (checkmark), "Powerful features" (gear), and "Surprisingly easy" (document). To the right, there's a search bar and a "Recent Posts" sidebar with links like "Launch of new product!!", "We welcomed a new team member!!", and "Marketing convention report!". A small preview of a post about a new product is shown at the bottom.

Theme Lightning published on [wordpress.org](https://wordpress.org)

Thanks to **80,000+** active installs  
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

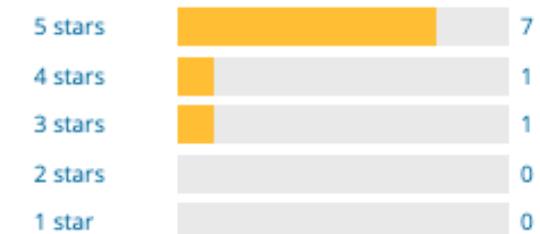
PHP Version: 5.6.0 or higher

[Theme Homepage →](#)

[See all >](#)

## Ratings

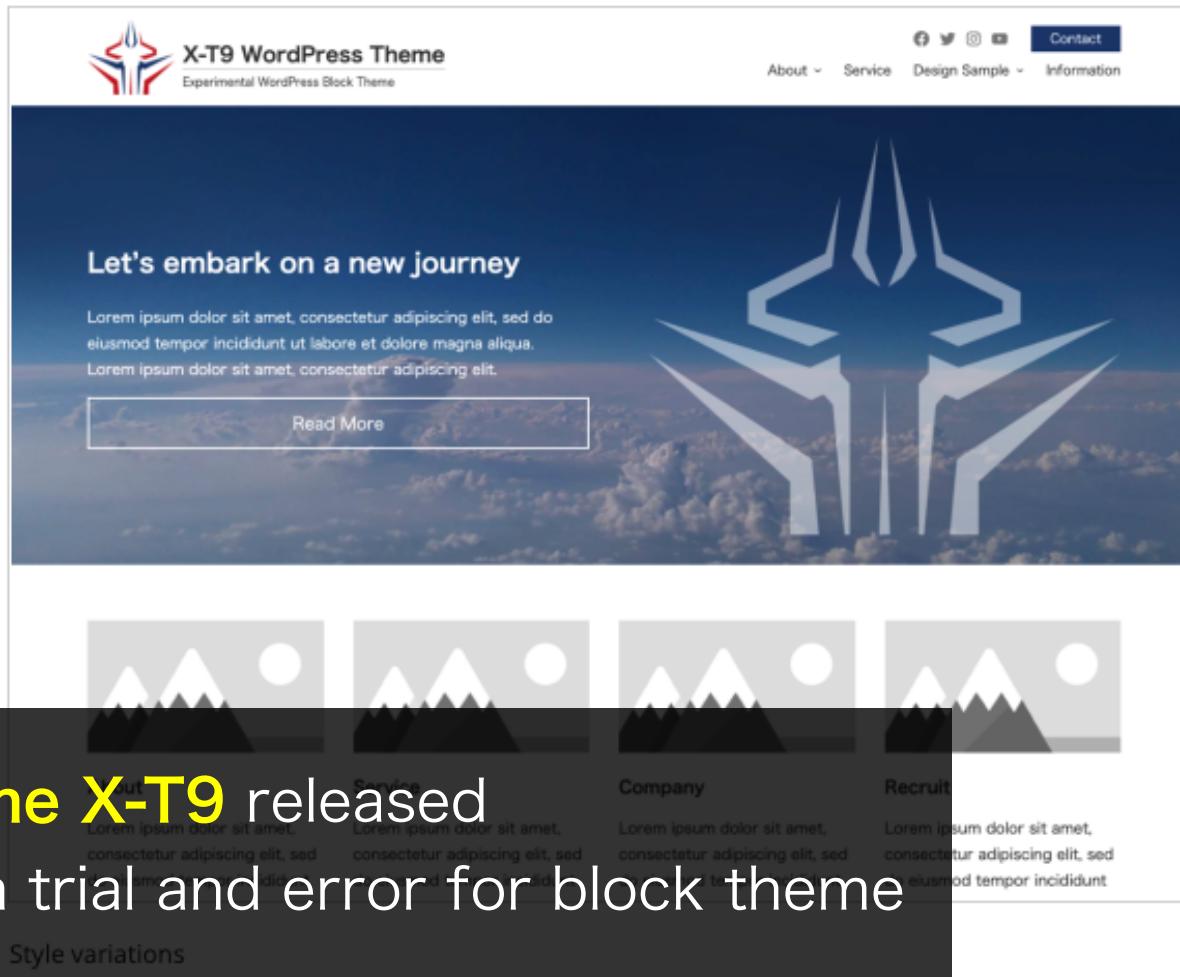
4.5 out of 5 stars.



[Add my review](#)

# 2022

## X-T9 By Hidekazu Ishikawa



### Block theme X-T9 released

Currently in trial and error for block theme

In addition, development and sales of **theme extension plugin** and other plug-ins

[Preview](#)[Download](#)

Version: 1.3.4

Last updated: December 23, 2022

Active Installations: 200+

WordPress Version: 6.1 or higher

PHP Version: 7.2 or higher

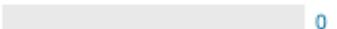
[Theme Homepage →](#)

[See all >](#)

### Ratings

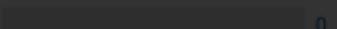
This theme has not been rated yet.

5 stars  0

4 stars  0

3 stars  0

2 stars  0

1 star  0

[Add my review](#)

# Business model of theme developers

## ( Before full site editing )

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Create and Sale

- 🔌 Premium Themes
- 🔌 Theme extension plugins
- 🔌 Block extension plugins ... etc.

💰 Relatively possible to sell and make money.



# Points where monetization has become more difficult

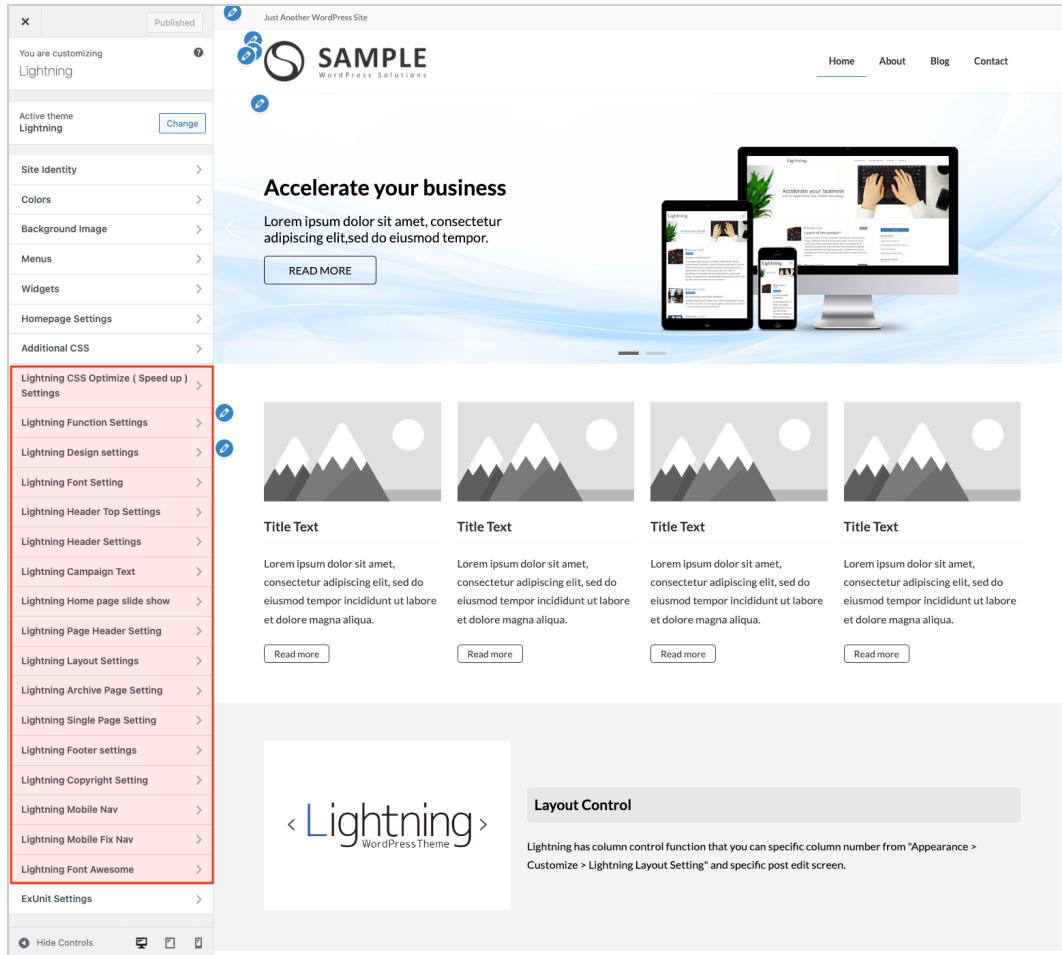
# 01

Traditional monetization points  
become less effective



# Before Full Site Editting

## Selling Premium theme



😊 User

↑ Easily edit      ↓ Reward 💰

😊 Theme developers

# Era of Full Site Editing

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The entire site can be customized with no code!

- ✍ Header and footer layout
- ✍ Specify color and font size
- ✍ Margin / Padding / Gap settings ...etc

I can do it !

→ **Much less theme dependent.**



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

# Monetization points disappeared...

(` ;  $w$  ; `)

# A matter of life and death

illilli \_|\_ |○ illilli

## # 02

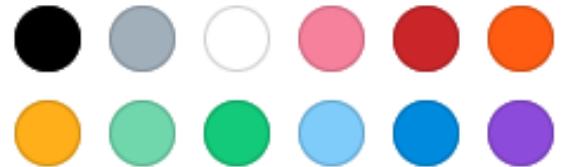
Decreased monetization effect  
by original Block features.



 Group  
A block that groups other blocks.

## Color settings ^

### Text Color



[Custom color](#)

[Clear](#)

### Background Color

[Solid](#) [Gradient](#)



[Custom color](#)

[Clear](#)

## Advanced ▼

# Early stage block editors

- :( No margin setting
- :( No border setting
- :( Can't Advanced layout  
( need like Media Block ) ... etc

We have developed our original blocks

→ Added value ( monetization points ).

# WordPress version upgrade...

- Advanced layouts are now possible with **Core Blocks** and **Block Patterns**.
- The **similar** function is added to the **Core Blocks**

The image shows the right-hand sidebar of the WordPress Block Editor. It includes:

- Group**: A section for gathering blocks in a container.
- Color**: Options for Text and Background.
- Typography**: A dropdown menu for font sizes (S, M, L, XL) and a preview bar.
- Dimensions**: Sliders for Padding and Block Spacing.
- Border**: A section for setting border width (PX) and radius.
- RADIUS**: A slider for corner radius (PX).
- Advanced**: A dropdown menu.

# Monetization points disappeared...

(` ;  $w$  ; `)

## In addition ...

- Original blocks become an **ongoing maintenance burden**
- It became necessary to **keep a close watch on Gutenberg's developments.**
  - ※ to avoid unnecessary development.

# 03

CSS output by WordPress  
became quite complicated



Many theme & custom block developers are facing this issue?

It is inevitable in the evolution of WordPress.

| T – T ) .oO ( I know. I love WordPress... )

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

It has become difficult to monetize traditional "theme sales".



# Future direction of theme-related business

# How add value and differentiate?



# Differentiation by Block Patterns

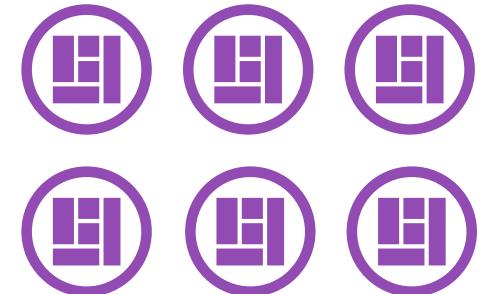
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## ☞ Easiest way

Includes various Block Patterns.

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

Block Patterns



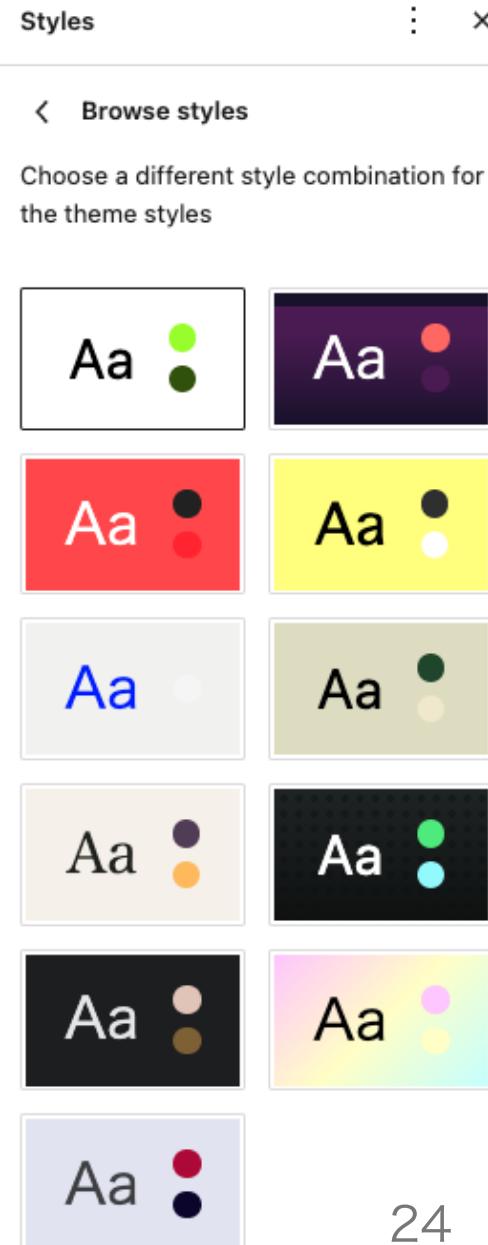
Theme

# Differentiation by Global Styles variations

## 💡 New Easiest way

"Global Styles variations" Feature Introduced in WordPress 6.0

We can create different variations within a single theme.



# Block Patterns / Global Style Variations

Even general users can make it, but...

High quality products created by professional  
→ High added value of course



**New extensibility** and **monetization points**.

# Our case

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Before FSE

## Theme License Package

- ▀ Theme ( Lightning / Classic / Free )
- ▀ **Theme extension** plugins ( Lightning Pro Unit )
- ▀ **Block extension** plugin ( VK Blocks Pro )
- ▀ Support

- 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
- We have to move to block themes too

Current

## Passport License Package

- **Theme** ( Classic Theme Lightning / Free )
- **Theme extension** plugins ( Lightning Pro Unit )
- **Block extension** plugin ( VK Blocks Pro )
- Support
- **Theme** ( Block Theme X-T9 / Free )
- **Premium Patterns** ← New!!

This configuration is

- **User can use both**  
**( Classic theme and Block theme )**
- **Keep existing users by the value of the Premium Patterns**

even if the value of the classic theme declines

- **Acquire new users**  
through the value of our Premium Patterns



**Block Patterns is extremely important**

# Publish our own Block Pattern Directory

<https://patterns.vektor-inc.co.jp/>

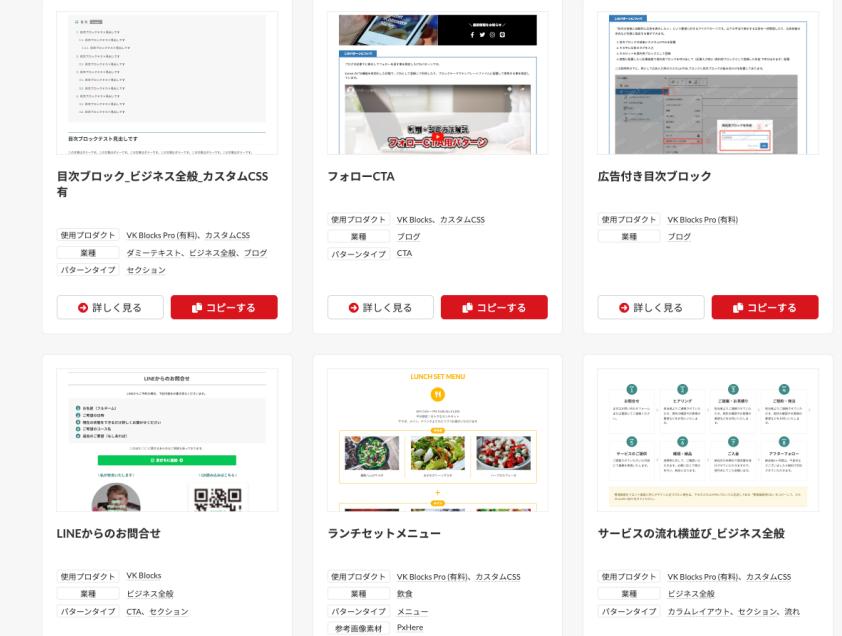
 Only available in Japanese

Inspired by the Org site:

<https://wordpress.org/patterns/>



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Vektor Pattern Library. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Patterns, Usage Methods, My Account, and Log In. A banner at the top right says "Copyable Block Patterns Library". Below the banner, there's a search form with dropdowns for Category (指定なし), Pattern Type (セクション (116)), Product Use (使用プロダクト (指定なし)), and Keyword. There are also filters for "お気に入りで絞り込む" (Only in favorites) and a "View Details" button. The main content area displays a grid of 12 block patterns, each with a preview image, title, product used, category, pattern type, and "View Details" and "Copy" buttons.



The bottom part of the screenshot shows a grid of 12 block patterns, each with a preview image, title, product used, category, pattern type, and "View Details" and "Copy" buttons. The patterns include:

- 目次ブロック\_ビジネス全般\_カスタムCSS 有
- フォローCTA
- 広告付き目次ブロック
- LINEからのお問合せ
- ランチセットメニュー
- サービスの流れ横並\_ビジネス全般
- セクション
- カタログ
- カタログ
- カタログ
- カタログ
- カタログ

# Why we created our own pattern directory?



## 1. Still difficult only with core blocks

Want to use our original blocks and CSS  
to provide higher quality patterns

! .org allowed **only core blocks** and **can't use Custom CSS**.

## 2. language problem

Characters look different in  
English and double-byte characters



# Pricing table

[Buttons](#) [Columns](#) [Featured](#)[Copy Pattern](#) Add to favorites

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

Default (960px) ▾

## Single

Enrich our growing community.

- General admission and member discounts for one adult

## Family

Support special exhibitions.

- General admission and member discounts for two adults

## Patron

Take support to the next level.

- General admission and member discounts for two adults

# 価格表

[Buttons](#) [Columns](#) [Featured](#)[Copy Pattern](#)

The balance is bad.

Default (960px) ▾

## 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
- 特別展ごとに5枚の無料チケ

### **3. Theme style affects**

Even if user paste the .org pattern,  
user need to make adjustments.

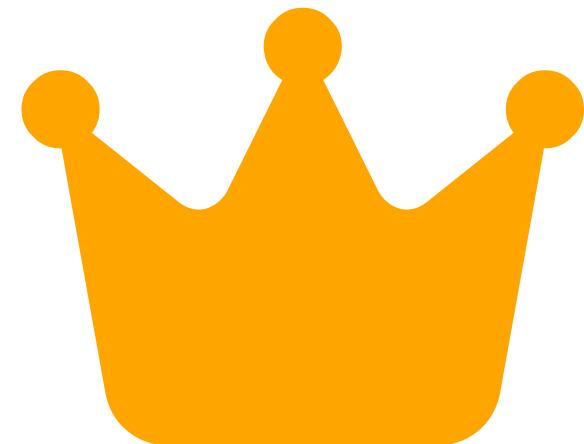
# How to increase product value?

we need to make an effort to  
get users to continue to license  
even if the dependency of the theme decreases.  
( Acquisition of new users )



## 1. Premium patterns

- Available to only paying users
- The design and sample sentences are  
**more elaborate are ready to use.**



# Ready to use?

We provide stylish and common patterns but...

Many **non-professional users**...

- :( **Can't think about page structure** in the first step
- :( **Can't think of the sentences to write**

# サンプル工務店のこだわり

## 01 価格 REASONABLE PRICE

自社の職人による施工なので

納得の価格

自社スタッフによる施工で、下請け業者にかかる中間マージンが発生しないため、納得のいく価格を

ご提供できます。

高い技術力とお客様のことを一番に考える専門スタッフが在籍しておりますので、安心してお任せください。

## 02 技術 CRAFTSMANSHIP

創業〇〇年、

磨き抜かれた確かな技術

創業〇〇年、年月と共に経験と技術を積み重ねてきました。

20XX年現在、30,000棟以上の住まいを施工し高い評価をいただいてきました。豊富な経験と知識はどこにも負けません。

## 03 設計 DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

長年培われた

安心安全なデザイン設計

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。

施工後の定期点検も実施しております。

create  
e for a specific industry.

施工事例

WORKS

The image is a collage of various screenshots from a real estate company's website. It includes:

- A large image of a modern living room with a grey sofa, yellow pillows, and a glass coffee table.
- A section titled "WORKS" featuring a "注文住宅" (Custom Home) category with a brief description and a "もっと見る" (View more) button.
- A "リフォーム" (Renovation) category with a similar brief description and a "もっと見る" button.
- A "店舗・オフィス" (Shop/Office) category with a brief description and a "もっと見る" button.
- A "会社案内" (Company Profile) section showing architectural blueprints and a note about access.
- A "家づくりの流れ" (Home Building Process) section showing a team working together.
- A "スタッフ紹介" (Staff Introduction) section showing staff members at their desks.
- A "役立ちブログ" (Useful Blog) section showing a blog post thumbnail.
- A "対応エリア" (Service Area) section listing service areas for different prefectures.
- An "お問い合わせ" (Contact Us) section with phone and email options.
- A "採用情報" (Recruitment Information) section.

## **For the End-user ( Business owner )**

Just rewrite the text to suit their business.

## **Commissioned creation**

By using a pattern as a draft of the page,

the **meeting with the client becomes smooth**



# Localization is essential

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

## Localized versions

No competition with English-speaking developers.

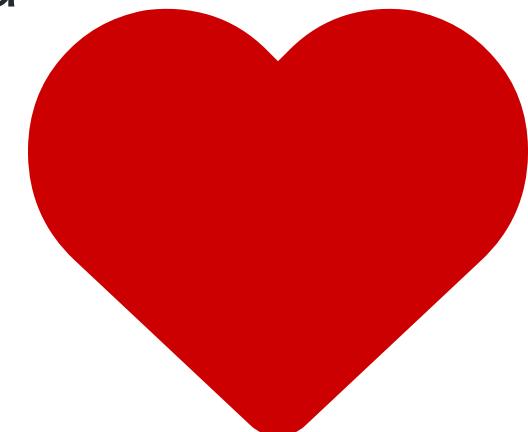
## 2. Favorite pattern registration function

Patterns are added one after another

→ Hard to find

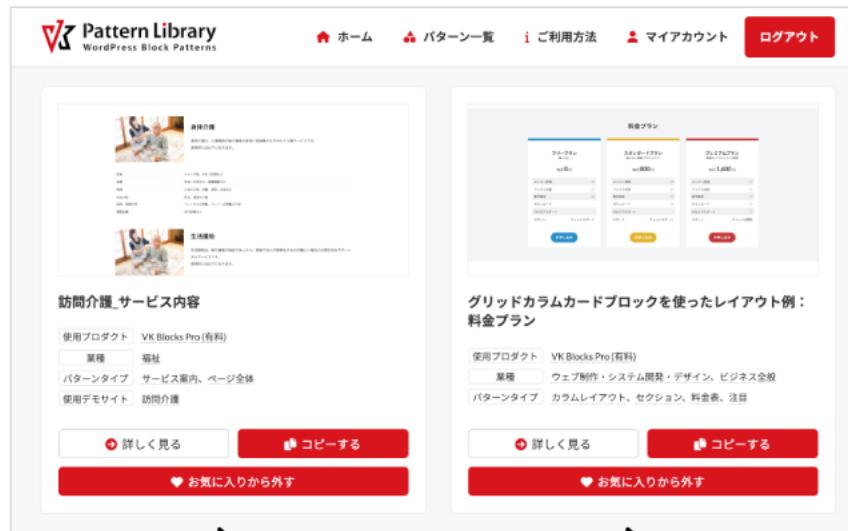
Users to register own favorite patterns and  
**easily recall them.**

※ Same functionality as wordpress.org



# 3. Link function for favorite registered patterns

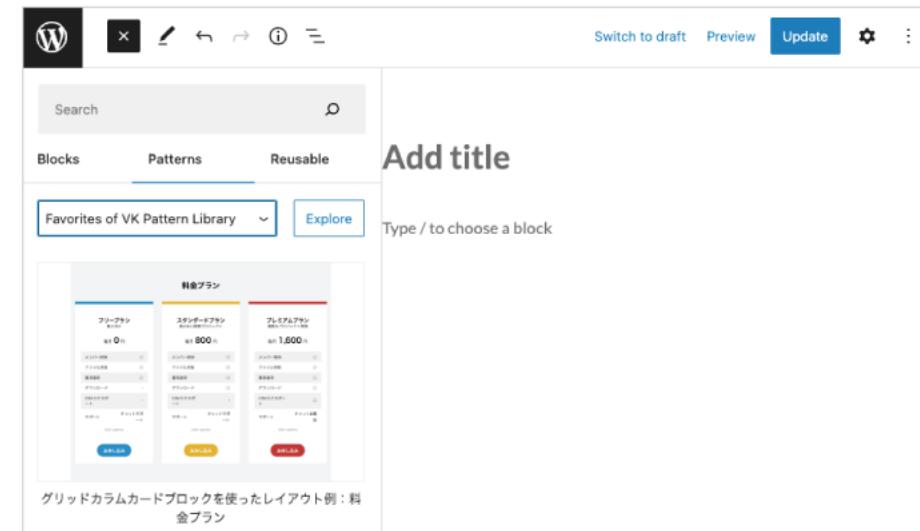
## Pattern library



Add to Favorites

API  
↔

## User's WordPress



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

# Is the theme business dead?

# Theme is important after all

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Themes and patterns are closely related to the global styles

Bring in a partial pattern from outside and use it  
→ Problem with the uniformity of the design.

**The importance of the theme is high.**

# Users need good themes and highly practical patterns

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FSE is highly configurable and customizable but...

→ **Too much configuration work**

It's **quite cumbersome** to make from scratch

**Know how to use**



**Can create designs**



**Same for WordPress**

# Responsive design compatibility

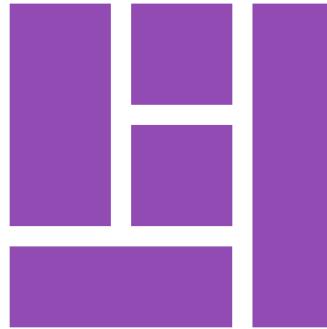
---

How to control display elements according to screen size?

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

It will be difficult to monetize the theme alone, but...

A set with a **Value-added patterns** are  
there will be **many business opportunities**.



**Value-added  
Patterns**

# At the end

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What do you think about future theme business?

Please share your opinion

🐦 Twitter #WCAsia @kurudrive

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

Thank you