

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



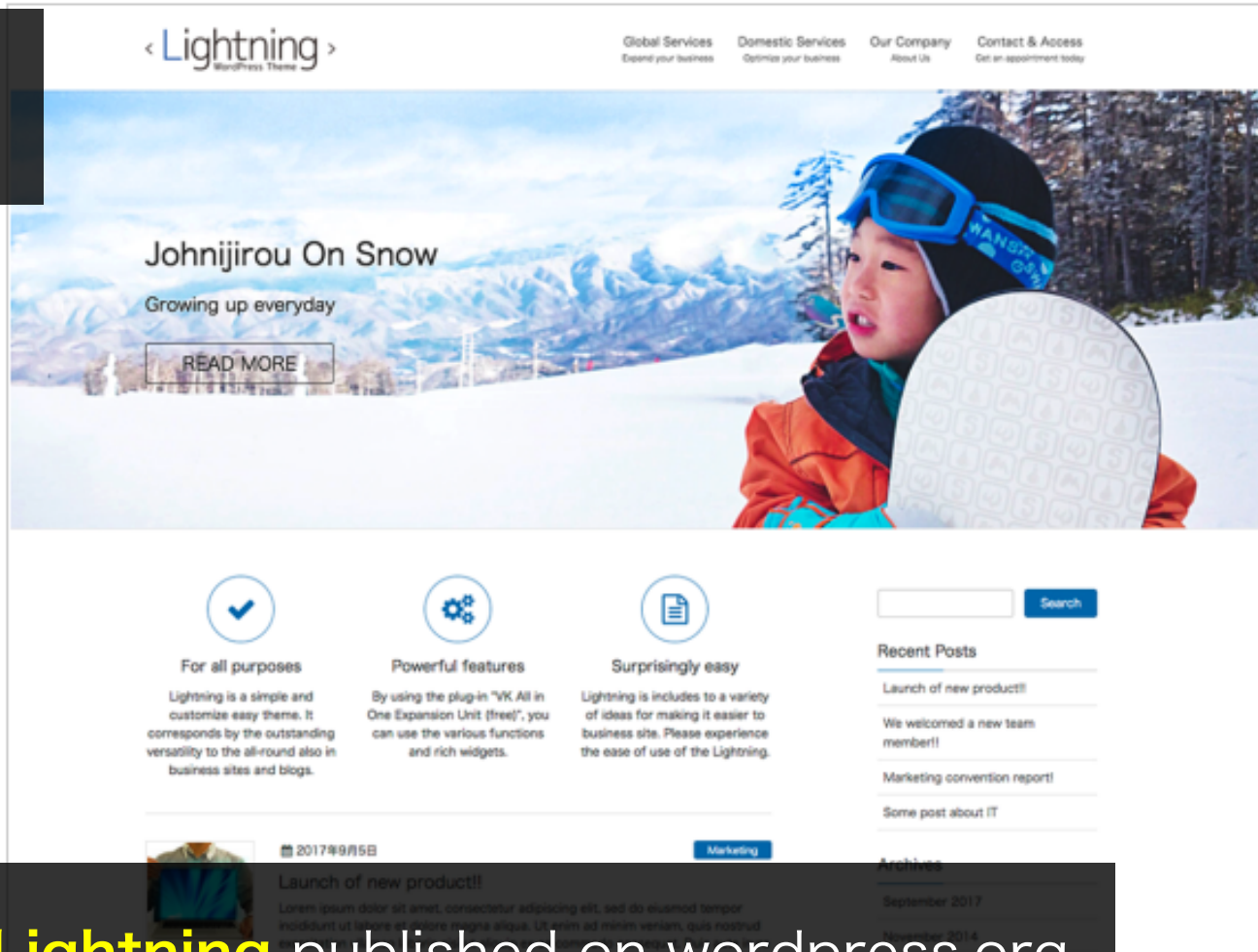
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**2012** First business WordPress theme release

# Lightning By Hidekazu Ishikawa



2015



Theme **Lightning** published on 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

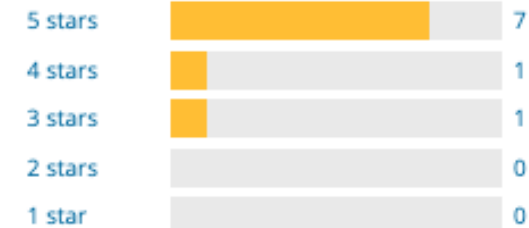
PHP Version: 5.6.0 or higher

[Theme Homepage](#) →

## Ratings

[See all >](#)

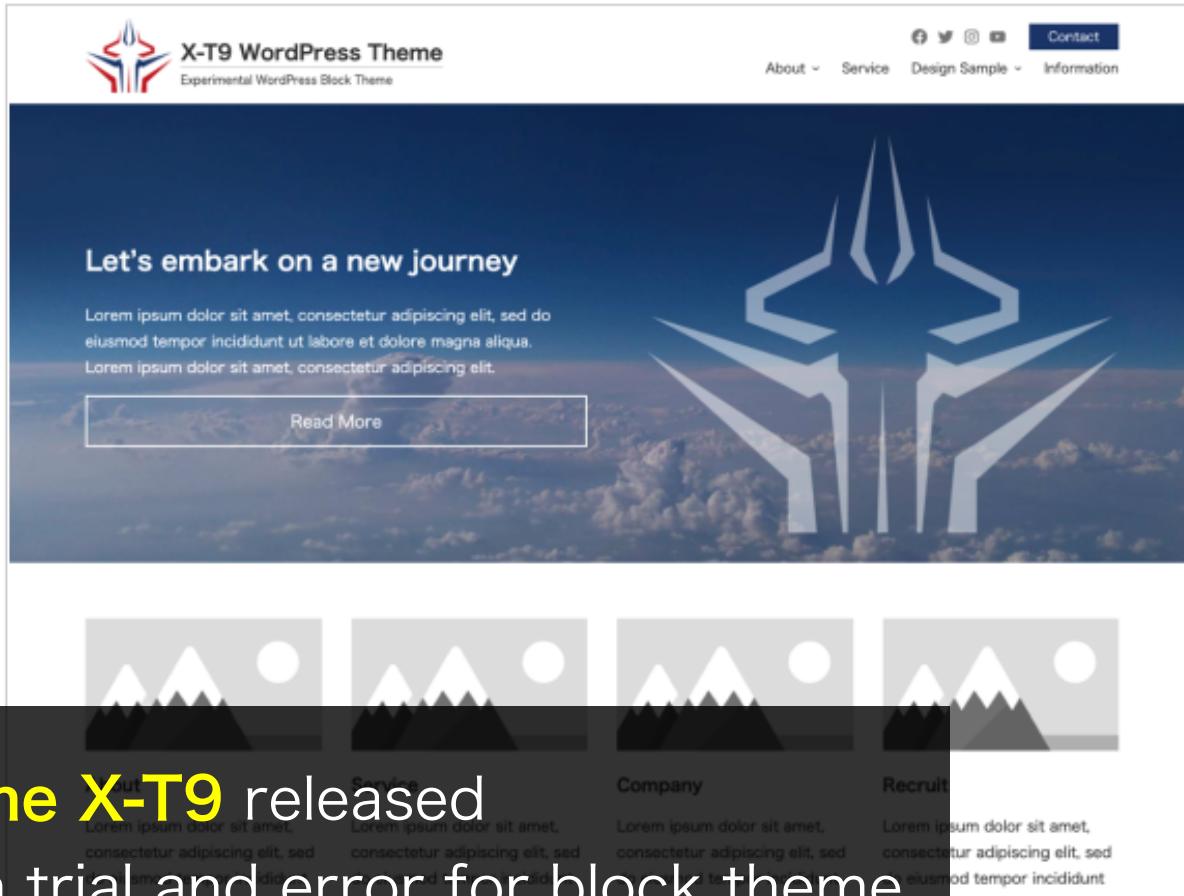
★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5 stars.



Add my review

2022

# X-T9 By Hidekazu Ishikawa



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](#) →

## Ratings

[See all >](#)

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](#)

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



# Business model of theme developers ( Before full site editing )

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Create and Sale

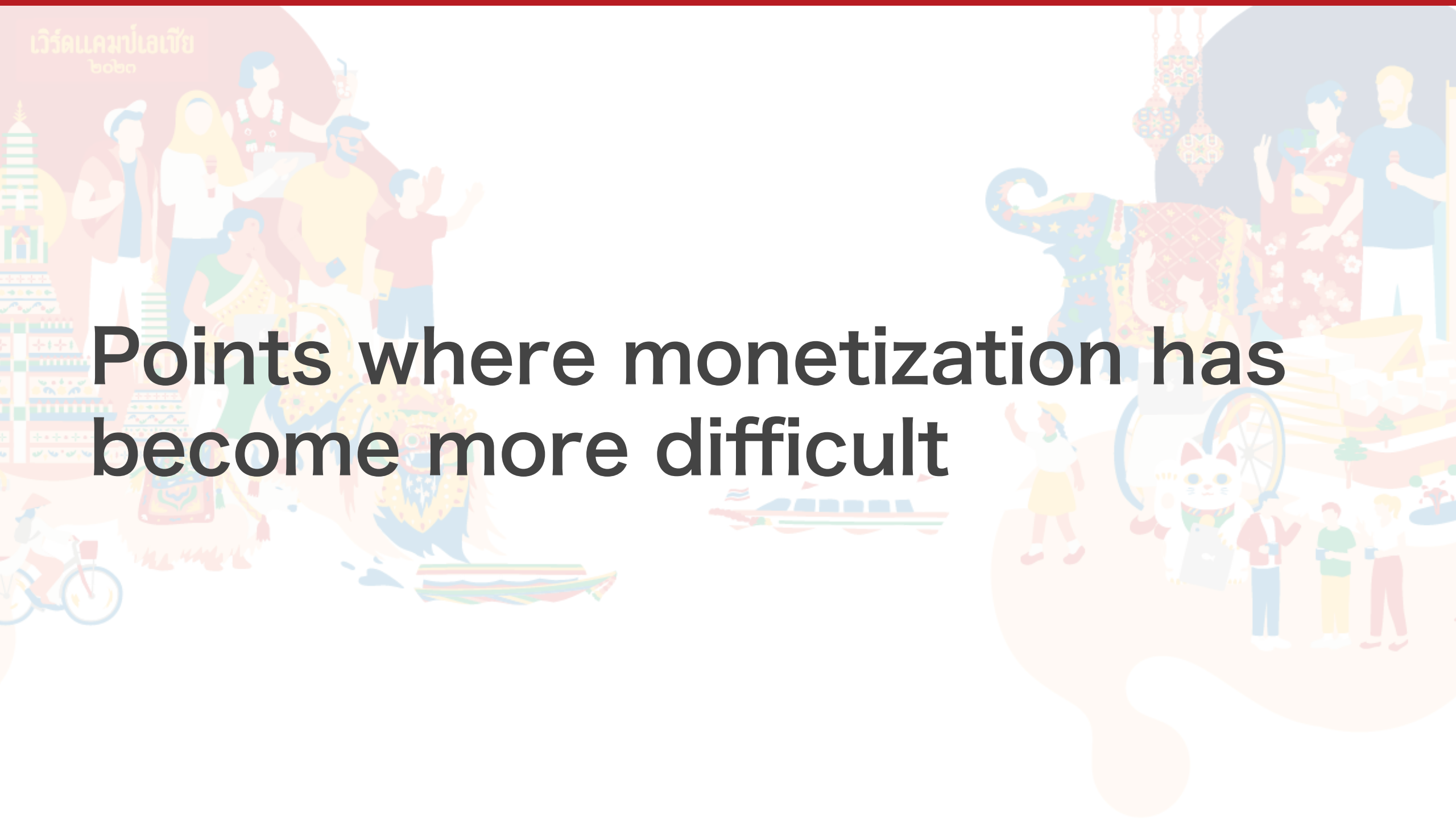
- 👑 Premium Themes
- 🔌 Theme extension plugins
- 🔌 Block extension plugins ... etc.

💰 Relatively possible to sell and make money.



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# Points where monetization has become more difficult



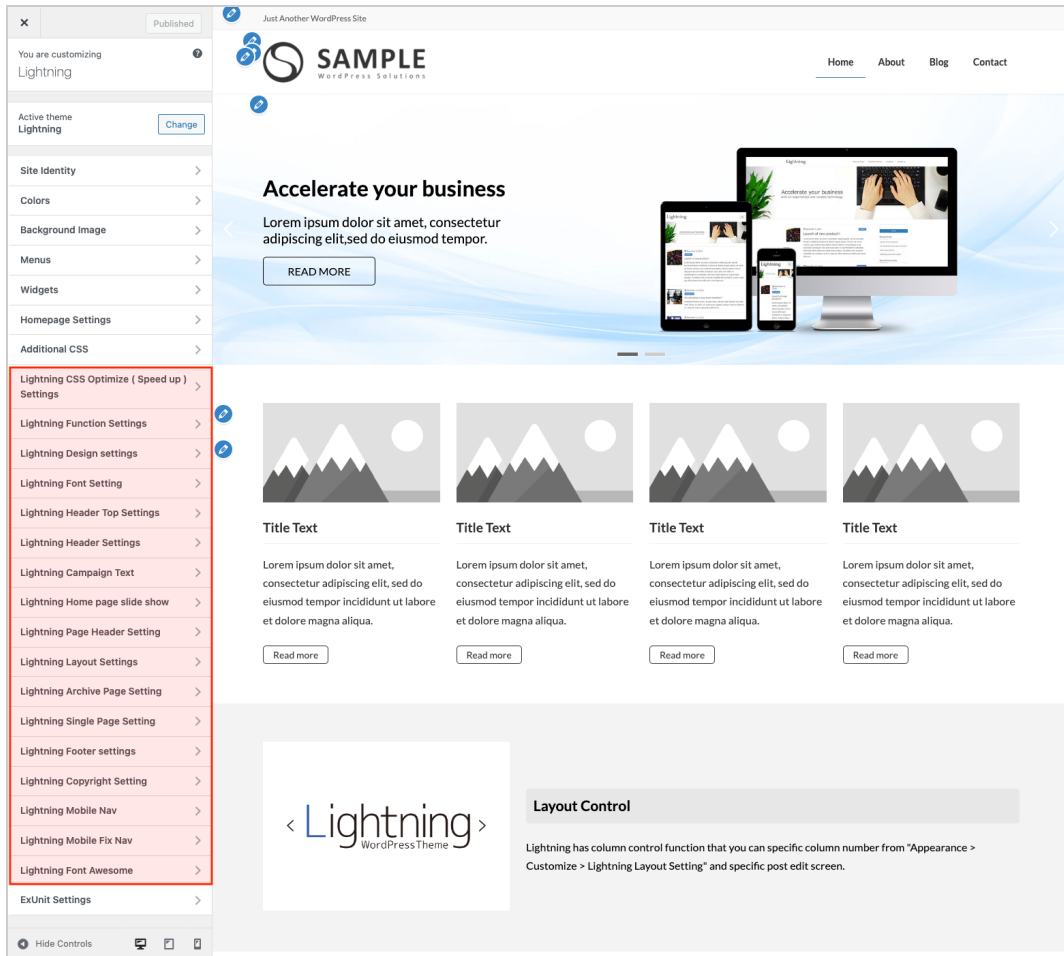
**# 01**

**Traditional monetization points  
become less effective**

( = W = )

# Before Full Site Editing

## 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

→ **Much less theme dependent.**

**I can do it !**





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

Monetization points  
disappeared...

( ' ;  $\omega$  ; ` )

# A matter of life and death



**# 02**

**Decreased monetization effect  
by original Block features.**


**( = W =**

# 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 ).

 **Group**  
A block that groups other blocks.

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Color settings ^

Text Color



[Custom color](#)

Background Color



[Custom color](#)

---

Advanced ∨



# WordPress version upgrade...

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

 Group  
Gather blocks in a container.

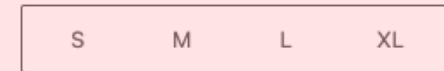


Color ⋮

- Text
- Background

Typography ⋮

SIZE DEFAULT ↕



Dimensions ⋮

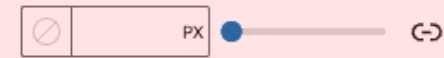
PADDING ↕ ↻



BLOCK SPACING ↕



Border ⋮



RADIUS



Advanced ∨

Monetization points  
disappeared...

(  $\omega$  ;  $\omega$  ;  $\omega$  )

## 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

( = W =

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".



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2023

# Future direction of theme-related business



**How add value and  
differentiate?**

( • W • ?

# 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.

View

Save

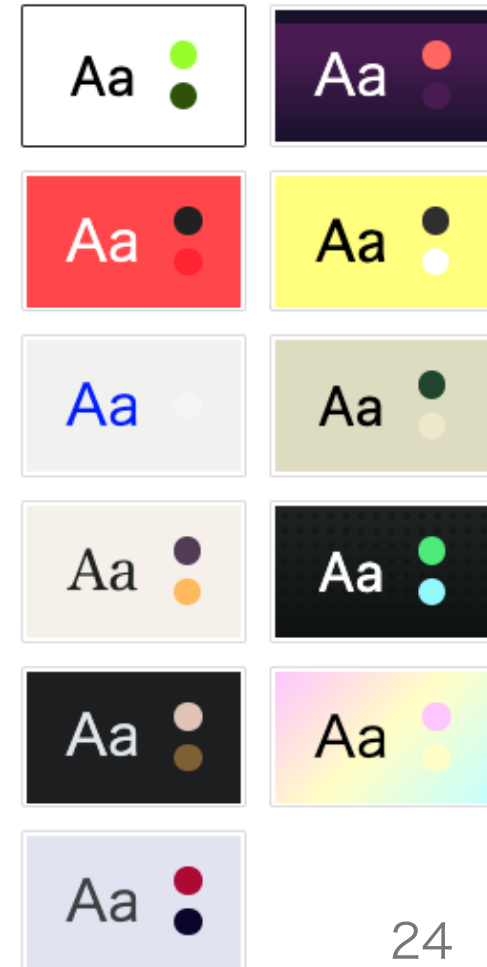


Styles



< Browse styles

Choose a different style combination for the theme styles





# 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

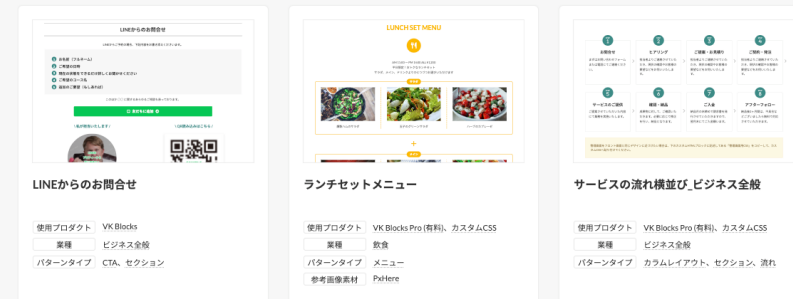
# Publish our own Block Pattern Directory

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

 Only available in Japanese

Inspired by the Org site:

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



**Why we created our own pattern directory?**



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枚の無料チケット

## 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枚の無料チケット

### **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.**



# Redy to use?

We provide stylish and common patterns but...

Many **non-profesional users**...

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

☹ **Can't think of the sentences to write**





## 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.

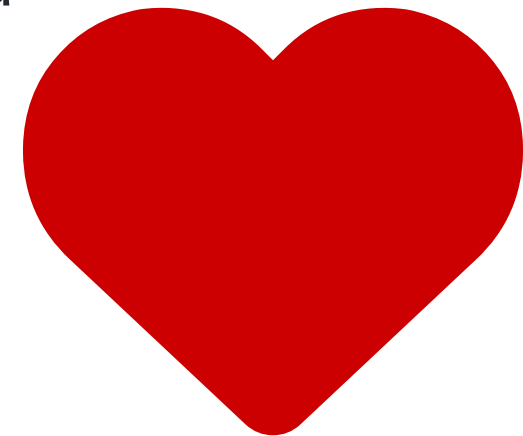
## 2. Favorite pattern registration function

Patterns are added one after another

→ **Hard to find**

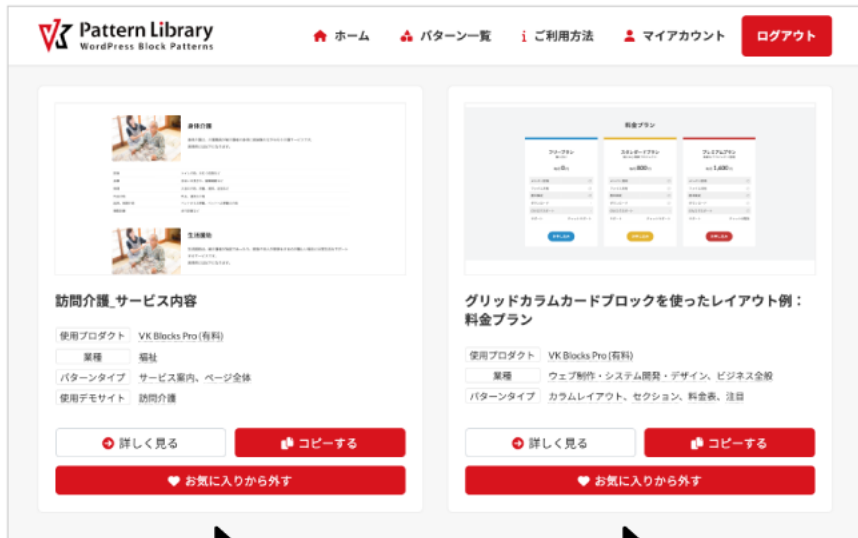
Users to register own favorite patterns and **easily recall them.**

※ Same functionality as [wordpress.org](https://wordpress.org)



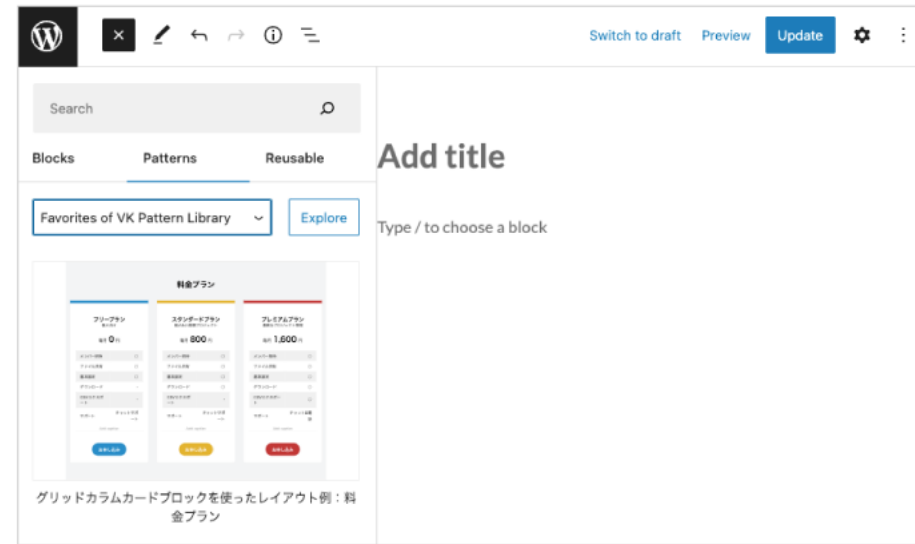
# 3. Link function for favorite registered patterns

## Pattern library



Add to Favorites

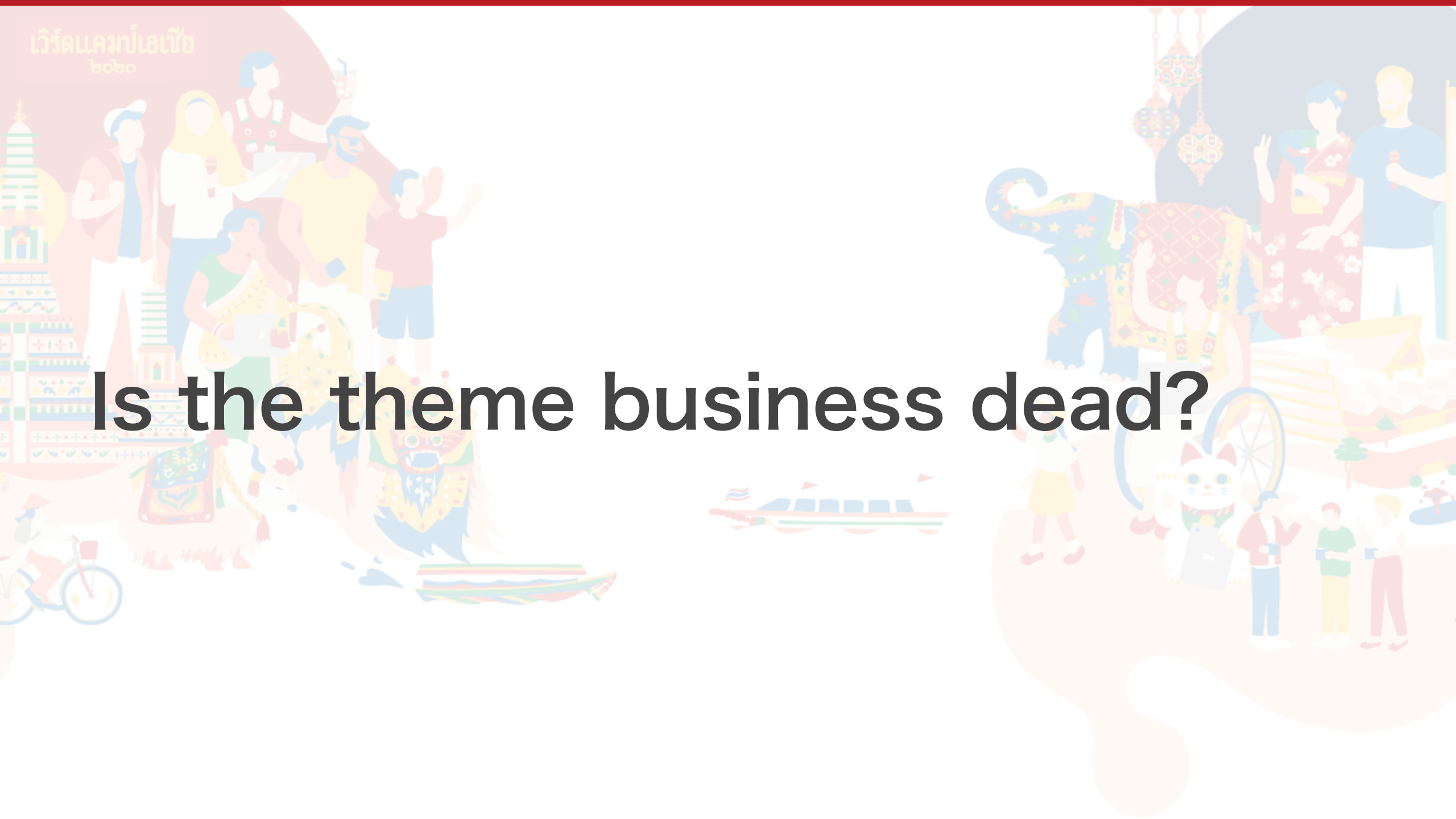
## User's WordPress



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

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**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

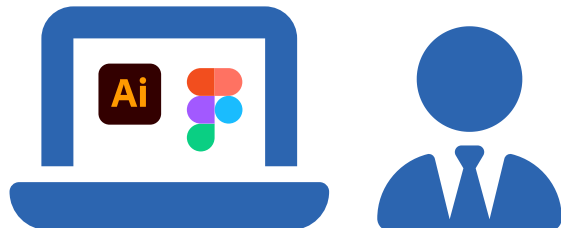
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FSE is highly configurable and customizable but...

→ **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

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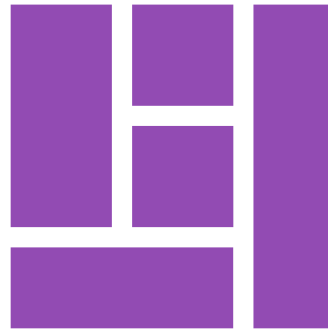
How to control display elements according to screen size?

- 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 #WCAAsia @kurudrive

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

## Thank you