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Digital heritage: A case study

Meri Taksi Deveciyan [1] & Hazal Koray Alay [2]

[1] İstanbul Kültür University, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, Business Management, İstanbul, Türkiye.
[2] Batman University, Health Services Vocational School, Department of Management and Organization, Batman, Türkiye.

Abstract This research aimed to assess the status of digital heritage and digital asset management as a source of strategic competitive advantage. The concept of digital heritage was examined in the individual dimension with "Author, Life Workshop Founder, Personal Consultant Mr. Aret Vartanyan" by using the qualitative research method "case study" model. In the case study, the "case" is Mr. Aret Vartanyan. Data triangulation, combining interview and document analysis, was used. PRISMA Statement was used to collect data for document analysis. The data were divided into themes in line with the descriptive analysis principles after the interview. The finding shows that the required legal regulations regarding digital heritage are essential, that the right strategies should be developed for digital asset management, and that the necessary to keep up with digital transformation in order to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. The study is expected to help researchers, practitioners and policy makers gain more in-depth knowledge about digital heritage and the impacts of managing and preserving digital assets.

Keywords Digital heritage · Digital asset management · Strategic competitive advantage · Digital footprint.

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Corresponding author: Hazal Koray Alay hazalkoray.alay@batman.edu.tr

1. Introduction

In our digitalized world, the way we protect existing information has also changed upon the widespread use of technology. Photos that we used to store in printed materials called albums are now mostly stored online. Finding and storing materials that are not accessible in the digital environment will not be as easy and accessible as it used to be (Bessarab, 2020). Depending on the rate of technology and Internet usage, large amounts of data production make the service offered by digital platform providers important (Nakagawa and Orita, 2022). After platform users die, their digital data constitutes their digital legacy. However, users do not need to have a consensual understanding of how and by whom their digital heritage will be managed (Borrego, 2020). While some users may want their digital inheritance to be deleted after their death, others may want their family members to manage their digital inheritance. Additionally, some users may want their digital heritage to be read or viewed by many people and may want to enable the commercialization of their digital heritage (Viola and Fiscarelli, 2020).

This perspective has revealed the concept of digital heritage, which is defined as the storage, protection, and transfer of digital assets to future generations. In recent years, NFTs and social media strategies have also played an important role in shaping digital heritage. For example, the sale of a digital work by the pseudonymous artist Beeple for $69 million as an NFT (Dowling, 2021) shows that digital content has both economic and cultural heritage value. Similarly, the construction of digital identities by social media influencers or brands through past narratives reinforces this process (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). In this context, individual digital narratives have become not only a form of personal expression but also a new field of heritage production. As Bukey (2022) states in his article titled "From Bricks to Clicks: How Digital Heritage Initiatives Create a New Ecosystem for Cultural Heritage and Collective Remembering", digital heritage offers a new ecosystem for collective remembering. Additionally, Tureby and Johansson (2022) similarly explain about this new ecosystem in their study in which they investigate why and under what conditions digital heritage is created, what can be considered digital heritage and its curation.

Digital heritage is expressed as tangible and intangible assets left/remaining in the digital environment after death. Domain names, web pages, e-mail addresses, shares in social media tools, avatars of games, rights owned on music and video platforms such as iTunes, Spotify, etc.of a deceased person in the digital environment are included in the field of digital heritage. Digital heritage is a product of changing social norms and culture. Li (2022) states that digital heritage is digital cultural assets. Gu (2022) explain that, compared to traditional heritage, digital heritage is better due to the intensive use of the internet and online storage opportunities, protecting copyright, tracing thanks to blockchain technology and additional economic return. Also, the area occupied by social media in human life has led to gains through social media platforms and this medium to become a source of income. This situation can be shown as the most important reason for the increase in the number of people called “YouTuber”, “influencer”, and“phenomenon” recently. Corporate and global companies advertise their products to these people, who have many followers on social media platforms, for brand promotions, and they prefer them as brand faces.

The concept of digital heritage, which emerged because of all these developments, is a subject that has not been studied much yet (Deveciyan and Alay, 2022).The concept of digital heritage has only been discussed in terms of its legal dimension and cultural heritage perspectives (Niccolucci, Felicetti and Hermon, 2022; Burkey, 2022; Paucar-León et al.,2022; Macdonald, 1996, Karp, 2014). In addition, previous studies focus on the "how" rather than the "why" of the processes related to digital heritage and digital

asset management (Tureby and Johansson (2022). This study examines why the concept of digital heritage is important.The concept of digital heritage will be examined at an individual level by using the “case study” model with “Author, Life Workshop Founder, Individual Consultant Mr. Aret Vartanyan” in this study. So, in this case study, the “case” is Mr. Aret Vartanyan.

It is thought that this article, which examines the perspectives and strategies of Aret Vartanyan, will increase the existing knowledge about new and developing digital heritage and digital asset management. It is anticipated that Aret Vartanyan's views on digital assets as a strategic competitive element will provide insight into the challenges and opportunities associated with investing in digital assets. Additionally, this study, which focuses on digital assets and addresses the lack of legal regulation, can help policy makers, legal experts and industry professionals gain in-depth knowledge of digital asset management and digital heritage.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Digital assets and digital asset management

The digitalizing world, the developments in technology, and the rapid increase in the use of the internet cause us to meet new concepts. One of the concepts that has become increasingly important and on the agenda in recent years is Digital Heritage. The concept of Digital Heritage, which is expressed as what remains of us in the digital environment after death, is also called a kind of digital footprint (Moncur and Waller, 2010).

First of all, to draw a framework for the concept of Digital Heritage, which is gaining importance, it is necessary to understand the concept of digital assets. Today, unlike the materials used before, information has begun to be produced, used and shared on electronic media. In this context, all content elements produced electronically have been described as digital assets and initiatives have emerged for the management of these elements. (Pérez-Montoro,2011).Under normal conditions, when people think of assets, they think of things that we can touch concretely, such as house, car, land, jewelry, electronic goods, furniture, and clothes. The values that people have in the digital world are also called digital assets. These assets, which have a digital structure and a unique value, include many elements such as websites, social media accounts, blogs, images, videos, drawings, books, crypto-currencies, e-mail messages, documents, movies, and sound files (Vučković and Kanceljak, 2019).Digital assets also enable people to live life more easily by changing their habits and to be able to reach the desired items at any time. For instance, whereas books that were bought and read in print used to fill the shelves, nowadays, electronic books stored in a file on the internet are considered as assets owned by people. When evaluated in this context, to make a general definition of digital asset, digital asset corresponds to all kinds of digitally realized values consisting of 1 and 0 numbers (Seker, 2015).

The prevalence of digital assets due to their easy access has made it necessary to redesign business management processes. From this point of view, it is seen that many businesses have started to work on digital transfer and digital asset management of some of their assets. In recent years, many studies have been conducted on how digital assets should be produced, protected and marketed (Toygar et al. 2013; Mikk and Sein, 2018; Schubauer, 2021). Digital asset management becomes meaningful at this point. Many elements such as hardware, software and business models developed for digital asset management provide a system with a structure that covers all digital assets (video, picture, text, etc.). In this regard, it is seen

that institutions take into account three basic elements in the management of digital assets: monitoring of existing assets, digitalization and storage (Münster, 2019). These three basic elements are effective in institutions' use of management-related systems for their increasing number of digital assets today. Digitization studies, which are among the elements in particular, have gone beyond institutional studies since the late 1990s and started to take part in the information policies of countries (Truong, Le and Niyato, 2023), and especially the studies carried out in national libraries have played guiding roles (Joint, 2009; Kopaliani, 2007). When digitalization studies are considered from this perspective, integrating the resources that institutions have with new technologies in digital asset management is effective in ensuring access and permanence within the framework of the approaches brought by new technologies (Tan et al., 2022;Grove et al., 2018). In this context, it is deemed necessary to prioritize digitalization applications, which are one of the important elements that enable digital asset management.

Another important aspect for the management process of digital assets is the value of the digital asset. Digital assets have both material and moral values (Kharitonova, 2021). While calculating a monetary value due to the cost spent during the establishment phase of a website opened for corporate or individual use, the works and products shared in the digital environment also have a moral value for the institution or person. In addition, the seizure of corporate or personal websites by others, theft of accounts can cause many emotional-based loss of value, such as loss of reputation, damage to brand value, and misdirection of customers, as well as financial losses (Seker, 2015).

The fact that digital assets have a value raises the issue of cost calculation. In order to calculate the cost of digital assets of businesses in information societies, transaction cost theory and agency theory are referred to in the literature (Parrilla, 2021; Patti, and Bartolini, 2019;Petkovic and Li, 2007). The theoretical background of this study is based on transaction cost theory and agency theory. Transaction cost theory is used as a basis to explain the formal (contractual) dimension of the relationship of digital assets with information technologies, and agency theory is used to explain the relational (based on principal-agent norms) dimension. As it is known, it can be said that the foundations of agency theory are based on Max Weber (Weber, 2019; Nelson 1974). The theory was later taken up by Berle and Means (1932) and developed by Jensen and Meckling (1976).

Agency theory briefly addresses the problems experienced as violations of the parties' rights and obligations within the scope of principal-agent contracts made between the principal and the agent, and the costs arising from this relationship (Shavell, 1979).Efforts to reduce and prevent principal-agent problems result in the principal bearing transaction costs. Transaction costs theory was put forward by Ronald Coase in his article in 1937 (Coase, 1937) and was developed through the work of Oliver E. Williamson and others (Williamson, 1981).Transaction cost theory and agency theoryare economic organization theories that have been presented to organization theory with the contributions of economists (Austerberry, 2012). The basic assumption of economic organization theories is that the owners of the organization establish an organization to increase their wealth and all their decisions are for this purpose. Interpretations based on this assumption are based on the behavior of individual actors. In this context, the transaction cost theory is simply a theory based on the transaction cost that a business pays for products and services procured from different sources for various reasons (Popescu, 2021.). Transaction costs occur around three main issues. These are search and information cost, bargaining cost, rules, and surveillance cost (Hill and Jones,1992) When the relationship between information technologies and transaction costs is examined, it can be stated that these costs have decreased significantly.The cost of searching faster on the Internet and

accessible websites reduces the cost of searching and information. Thanks to information technologies, the cost of bargaining is reduced by comparing alternatives and saving time. Similarly, thanks to information technologies, rules and surveillance costs are reduced in processes such as supply chain management, product service tracking and control, identification of the problem and the responsible person (Seker, 2015). The agency theory, on the other hand, is a theory that deals with the motivations of the parties in cooperation with each other, their need to control each other, the information flow between them and the solution of the problems arising from this flow (Schubauer, 2021). Agency theory is known to have developed in the knowledge economics literature (Eisenhardt, 1988). When the relationship between information technologies and agency theory is examined, the use of proxies in some processes in which companies provide information services comes to the fore. Attorney costs arise in works such as monitoring outsourced business processes and auditing the company (Hay,1996).

The processes of ownership, transfer and management of digital assets can be explained in an economic context by transaction cost (Coase, 1937) and agency (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) theories. However, these theories are insufficient to understand the cultural and historical dimensions of digital heritage. Therefore, in this study, the economic approaches in question are addressed in a complementary manner with the historical organizational literature without completely excluding them. In this context, the theoretical infrastructure of the research is also structured with historical organizational studies and organizational memory literature. Thus, digital heritage is evaluated not only as an economic; but also as a memory-based, identity-based and institutional structure.

Maclean, Harvey, and Clegg (2016) define historical organizational studies as a critical approach that examines how the past finds a place in organizational structures and practices. This approach reveals that digital heritage is not only an individual property but also a collective memory object. Similarly, Walsh and Ungson (1991) define organizational memory as a system in which information acquired in the past is stored in a structured manner and affects future decision-making processes. The productions of individuals who leave traces on digital platforms can also be considered as current and digital representations of these memory systems. The question of how digital content will be used and transferred in the future, independent of the individual, is exactly an issue that the organizational memory literature focuses on and brings to the agenda the need for institutionalization of digital assets. Therefore, in this study, digital heritage is considered both as an extension of individual digital identity and branding, and as a form of digital remembrance historically left to the future (Coraiola, Foster, & Suddaby, 2015; Wadhwani & Bucheli, 2014).

Calculating the value of digital assets, the management process of these assets and how and with which systems this process should be managed is another important issue. In this context, digital asset management consists of management tasks and decisions that take place around the storage, search, distribution, grouping, and transfer of digital assets (Re Cecconi et al., 2020). The most common of the technologies used for the management of digital assets is a new technology called NFT, which works in the blockchain ecosystem and where payments are usually made with crypto-currencies (predominantly Ethereum). In short, NFT is a technology that gives ownership to digital assets and registers and registers their authenticity. The equivalent of the abbreviation representing the name NFT (non-fungible token) can be defined as uniqueand non-tradable tokens (Wang et. al, 2021). Thanks to NFT technologies, graphic design, painting, music, video etc. assets in other digital media gain an identity and are recorded. At this point, an important dimension of strategic competitive advantage emerges. This dimension is the mutual trading of NFTs and their buying and selling for figures expressed in millions of dollars. This makes digital assets an

important source of competitive advantage in individual and organizational terms (Popescu, 2021; Watkins, 2021; Cherrington et al., 2020).

2.2. Digital heritage

The concept of digital heritage has become a frequently mentioned concept recently, with the emergence of digital assets due to developments in technology. According to the definition of the German Bar Association, digital heritage refers to the digital assets and all accounts and data on the internet, including the testator's copyrights, website rights, domain name rights and all contractual relations with the internet service provider (Farooqui et al., 2022). According to the National Library of Australia (2003), digital legacy means the transfer of the deceased person's rights over their digital assets to their legal heirs. In another definition, digital heritage is a generalized transfer mechanism of digital assets according to the universal succession order (Tekelioglu, 2022; Ucak, 2021). Since it is difficult to clarify the scope and boundaries of digital assets, general and inclusive expressions are used when defining digital heritage. In this context, it is possible to define digital heritage as the whole of digital values that are available for transfer through inheritance from the digital assets belonging to the testator (Sheridan, 2020).

The majority of the items that comprise digital heritage, including digital assets, can be transferred from one generation to the next if so desired. Digital heritage can be divided into different forms based on how it is distributed, such as through the internet and digital media, or how it is preserved and archived on certain media (such optical discsand tapes). Digital data generation, storage, monitoring, distribution, presentation, and security are only a few of the technological aspects that comprise digital heritage. (Wang, et al., 2020). At this point, the digital world provides us with a new living space next to real life, and in this living space, individuals have some assets that have both economic value and touch on their personal rights (Toygar et al., 2013). Millions of people use social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, some of them earn advertising revenues through these accounts and even carry out their commercial activities through these platforms (White et al,. 2013). On the other hand, digitalized people transfer various personal data to Cloud accounts, make payments and purchase products and services through online banking activities (Navarrete, 2019). On the other hand, the management and preservation of digital heritage can be better understood in the light of historical organizational studies. Maclean et al., (2016) examines how historical organizational studies find a place in the organizational structures and practices of the past, and aims to clarify the theoretical contributions in this field by focusing on how historical organizational studies shape the structures and practices of organizations in the past and today. Based on Maclean et al., (2016), we find a theoretical basis for evaluating digital heritage not only as an individual property element but also as a collective memory object. Organizational memory literature reveals how information acquired in the past is structured and how this information affects future decision-making processes (Walsh & Ungson, 1991). Digital assets are also expected to play an important role in the flow of information between individuals and organizations in relation to these memory systems. Again, the transformation of collective memory in the digital age also shows that digital heritage has not only an individual but also a social and cultural dimension. Yasseri, Gildersleve, and David (2022) examine the effects of digitalization on collective memory and state that digital tools and trace data offer new opportunities for examining collective memory formed within and outside the digital sphere. In this context, social media platforms serve as memory spaces for individuals and communities to share and archive their memories in a digital environment. These platforms enable the rewriting of the past and the transformation of the culture of remembrance by allowing individual and social memories to be archived in cyberspace (Erdoğan, 2024). Therefore, the protection and manage-

ment of digital heritage is important not only for the sustainability of individual digital assets but also for the sustainability of social memory. Aret Vartanyan's views also contribute to the literature by underlining that digital assets have not only economic but also cultural and social meanings. In the protection and sustainability of digital cultural heritage, it is becoming increasingly critical for policy makers and public leaders to take an active role. As UNESCO particularly emphasizes, digital heritage is not only a technical issue, but also a social, cultural, and political issue (UNESCO, 2003). In this context, the transfer of digital heritage to future generations should not be limited to archiving or technical preservation processes; beyond this, institutional support and resource planning should be integrated into the process with the strategic guidance of decision makers (Giaccardi, 2012). A policy base with high awareness will allow digital cultural heritage to be kept alive in a more inclusive and sustainable way. In addition, the protection of digital cultural heritage should not be limited to the digitization of existing resources; it should also include digital literacy, digital access policies and the active participation of local/regional actors in the process, which are necessary for the survival of this heritage. Cameron (2007) states that digital cultural policies cannot be successful without encouraging the digital participation of society. At this point, the public strategies of countries that support scientific activities create a framework that will strengthen not only academic production but also social awareness and cultural continuity (Parry, 2007). Therefore, the sustainability of digital cultural heritage becomes a priority theme that should find a place in cultural policies. As a matter of fact, in recent years, the nature of cryptocurrencies, domain names, applications and rights over NFTs, and especially their economic values and whether they will be inherited, have caused deep debate (Münster and Terras, 2020). In this context, digital heritage can be classified into two categories: digital assets that possess economic value and those that do not (Zhang et al., 2022). Characters and avatars for owned video games, social media platforms, blogs, images, movies, thoughts, domains, and revenue accounts are examples of those with economic worth. Even digital assets with no monetary worth can be very important to heirs. As a coping mechanism for the deceased's absence, access to social media profiles or storage sites, for instance, may be required in emotional recollection of the deceased (Aryamov and Gracheva, 2019). Some digital service providers do not make any arrangements in the event of the death of the digital account holder, and the most common consequence is that the account is frozen or left unused. However, it is seen as a reasonable solution for the testator to express his freedom of disposition regarding who will use his online digital assets in a will (Dinc, 2019). Based on digital heritage, many digital service providers, however, have varying restrictions regarding account flexibility. For instance, the transfer or freezing of the account following the death of the user is also subject to regulations, just as there are contracts that users must agree to register an account. Many service providers, including Yahoo, Google, or Microsoft, have non-transferability clauses in this regard. However, several companies that offer services, like Google, Facebook, or Amazon, give account holders the choice of what happens to their account in the event of their passing (Kreiczer-Levy and Donyets-Kedar, 2018). For instance, the user has two alternatives for post-mortem access in accordance with Facebook's Terms of Service.Therefore, unless the user has previously decided to permanently deactivate the account, the user's profile will be symbolically replaced by a permanent profile in the case of their passing. The user also has the option to select the individual whose access to such an account will be restricted (Meta Inc, 2023).

While evaluating the transfer of digital assets and social media accounts to the heirs, many factors should be evaluated, and a conclusion should be reached. In addition, while examining the subject, it is important to make a classification regarding the use of social media accounts. It is necessary to make legal arrangements that the accounts that are not used for communication and socialization purposes, earn financial gain, receive advertisements, and have very high follower/click-through numbers, can be passed to the heirs by

legal or voluntary transfer. Because if these accounts are continued to be used or the accounts are sold, serious economic gains will come to the fore, and the material value here will have to be transferred to the heirs (Dinc, 2019; Aryamov and Gracheva, 2019). When the judicial decisions and country decisions on the subject are examined, the German Federal Court has decided that the right of access to the social media account, which is created pursuant to the social media account usage agreement between Facebook and the social media account owner, will be transferred to the heirs (İleri, 2020). Similarly, in the USA, after the death of the Yahoo user, social media accounts and the contents of these accounts should be considered as estate (everything left from a deceased person) in terms of inheritance law, and it was decided that these accounts should also be passed on to the heirs. However, although there are precedents for the inheritance of digital assets, there is no acceptable mechanism. The absence of a legal systematic for digital assets that exceed personal use and have commercial value adversely affects both users and the industry (Walker, 2017; Perrone, 2012).

3. Methodology

This study is in the “case study” model and as such it is qualitative research. The main purpose of qualitative data analysis is defined as interpretation, description, understanding, and explanation. Case study is mostly built on understanding a connected system created by a certain person, class, or institution in its own environment (İlgar and İlgar, 2014). In this case study, the 'case' refers to a phenomenon represented by a well-known individual—Aret Vartanyan. He was selected as the focal subject due to his prominence as an expert in his field, his strong personal brand across digital platforms, and his direct engagement with digital assets. Additionally, one of the researchers had a pre-existing connection to Vartanyan through peer-ethnic social networks, which facilitated access. In case study research, an interconnected system formed by an individual, group, or specific situation is examined within its natural context. The study was designed with a single participant (Aret Vartanyan) in accordance with the case study model. The interview questions were created in a semi-structured way, inspired by the studies of Al-Sheik and Saad (2021) and Nakagawa and Orita (2022).

In qualitative studies, even if the comments and thoughts of the researchers about the research observation are personal, they have an important place, so their knowledge and experience related to the “case study” field, as well as their observations and comments during the interview were included in the data analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Within the framework of this general scope, the main research question of the study is:

Table 1

Theme and Questions

Theme	Question
Digital Heritage Perception	What do you think about digital heritage?
Economic Value of Digital Assets	Do you see digital accounts as assets? Can the concept of digital heritage be used as a strategic competitive element?
Digital Heritage and Legal Gaps	Do you consider appointing a “digital heir” to protect your personal data in the event of your death?
Digital Brand and Identity	Do you think the name “Aret Vartanyan” is a digital brand? Based on what?

Theme	Question
Digital Future Forecast	How do you see digital platforms such as social media, personal accounts, domain names in five years? How do you see the concept of digital heritage in the future of digital branding?
Necessity of Institutionalization of Digital Heritage	When you think about the concept of digital heritage, how do you view the idea of managing these digital assets through an intermediary institution (such as a bank) like other assets?

In the study, “data triangulation” was carried out by using a combination of interview and document analysis, which are among the qualitative data collection methods. Data diversity helps prevent bias and misunderstandings.

3.1. Interview

The interview with Aret Vartanyan, the subject of the research, was conducted with open-ended questions by using a conversational interview approach. Some of the questions were predetermined but were developed and asked in a way that would not disrupt the natural flow of the conversation. In the interview, it was tried to reflect the opinion, experience, and perception of the interviewer about the subject or subjects by talking about the subjects that were desired to be detailed. The online interview (through the Zoom Cloud Meeting program) was terminated in approximately 90 minutes.

3.2. Document analysis

In this research, the PRISMA Statement was used to collect data for document analysis. The PRISMA Statement is designed to help transparently report what was done during the data collection process for systematic reviews, what selection and elimination system researchers carried out in the relevant process, and what they found (Page et al., 2021). To carry out a systematic compilation process, the databases to be scanned were determined within the scope of the PRISMA Statement. As can be seen from the Appendix 1, author Aret Vartanyan's books, blog posts, social media platforms and videos were examined according to the specified criteria ("inclusion" and "exclusion").

X (Twitter), which is the most widely used social media platform (Erben, 2019; Kıyan &Kocager, 2020), was examined. The words "digital" and "digital asset" were searched in the personal account of writer Aret Vartanyan between January 2021 and September 2022[1], and the results were examined. The books written by Vartanyan were purchased and read by researchers, but no data could be found in the context of digital assets in his books. To access the author's blog posts, the websites[2] where the blog posts were most published were examined. To access the videos, they were searched in the Google search engine as [site: youtube.com, "aretvartanyan and digital] and examined. Documents that had to be excluded due to various reasons such as similarity of names or being irrelevant to the subject were eliminated and finally (n= 172) were separated for document review.

[1] Researchers made continuous searches within the specified date range since Twitter allows data sharing for seven days.
[2] https://digitalnetworkalkas.com/ and https://www.milliyet.com.tr/haberleri/aret-vartanyan

4. Data analysis

In the analysis of the data obtained in the study, descriptive analysis was used. The purpose of descriptive analysis is to present the data obtained through interview, observation, and document review to the reader in an organized and interpreted way (Berg, 2001). The data obtained because of descriptive analysis is presented with a descriptive approach by using direct quotations without interfering with their original structures (Wolcott, 1994). In descriptive analysis, the data are summarized and interpreted under the predetermined general framework and the themes related to this framework (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021).

Data analysis of the study begins with the selection of documents and accessing the document according to the determined criteria. The documents selected according to the subject of the research were limited, the originality of the documents was checked, and it was decided to apply the interview technique instead of a single data collection method according to the research problem and sub-problems. Then, the descriptive analysis phase was started for document analysis and interview notes. With descriptive analysis, the data were summarized and interpreted under the predetermined general framework and themes related to this framework. Although the data in the study are presented with a descriptive approach, some themes were determined and based on the literature review (especially by researching the subject of digital assets) in advance (appropriate to the research problem and sub-problems). Relationships have been established between these themes. For example, digital asset management, the future of digital heirship and digital assets from a business perspective. In addition, researchers analyzed the data using their own comments in addition to descriptive analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that it is appropriate to use researcher comments in situation analysis. Thus, in the data analysis part of the study, triangulation was made by using both approaches together. This is a situation that increases the validity and reliability of the study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021; Patton; 2002).

Based on this view, the data of the study were collected in accordance with the semi-structured interview form prepared in advance, abbreviated, and summarized in a way that would be more meaningful. However, during the interview process, some of the questions created by the researchers in the interview form and expert opinion was taken, were changed because the answers were not satisfactory, and some additional questions were added, and necessary probing was made. The data obtained were collected and processed under themes by making use of the previous experience and knowledge of the researchers in the field of case study, research questions, the conceptual framework of the research, interviews, and documents. In the next stage, the findings were developed in advance, the significant relationship between the themes (categories) and some explanatory and causal results were examined, supported by the direct statements of the interviewer where necessary, defined and interpreted by the researchers.

4.1. Validity and reliability

There are also some measures that can be taken regarding validity and reliability, which is one of the issues that are frequently criticized in case studies. Yin (2003) recommends examining the construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability features to increase the quality of the research design.

To increase the **Construct Validity**, data diversity was made in the data collection phase. Data were collected through both document analysis and interview. In addition, the prepared case study report was read to the interviewer (Aret Vartanyan) and his opinion was taken. Again, direct quotations were made from the statements taken from the interviewer, which were considered important. Thus, a chain of evidence was also created. For **Internal Validity**, the researchers explained how the conclusions were reached in a

clear way in the research part of the study and presented the relevant proofs in a way that the readers could reach. Regarding **External Validity**, in case study, there is no statistical generalization, but "analytical generalization" can be made. It cannot be expected to generalize the findings and results of this study to other digitally branded public figures, authors, etc. in Turkey. In addition, the research does not have such a purpose. The findings and results obtained are valid only for the interviewer because it is known that social phenomena are formed and shaped only in the environments they are in contact with (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). In terms of **Reliability**, the research part of the study has been designed in such a way that it will allow the researchers who want to study in this field in the future to reach the same results by following the same paths.

All the factors mentioned above reduce the concerns about the validity and reliability of the research.

5. Findings and discussion

The general framework emerged within the scope of the research and the themes prepared in accordance with this framework are shown in the table as **"digital assets with a commercial perspective", "digital assets/ heritage importance", "future of digital asset management /digital heir", "digital assets as a strategic competitive element"**. As a result of the analysis of the data, as can be seen from the table below, a total of 4 main themes and 3 sub-themes were found.

Table 2

Themes And Sub-Themes That Emerged As A Result of The Analysis of The Data

THEMES
1. Digital assets with a commercial perspective
2. Digital assets / heritage importance
3. Future of digital asset management / digital heir
3.1. Embodiment of Digital Assets
3.2. Legal Basis
3.3. Uncertainty
4. Digital assets as a strategic competitive element

The importance of the themes listed above depends on their contribution to answering the research questions, not on their quantitative strength (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The predetermined general framework based on the literature review and the themes created according to this framework were revised and finalized after interviews and document analysis. For example, using an additional/substitute theme such as the future of digital inheritance, as a literature review found a limited number of resources on the management of the concept of digital heritage.

5.1. Findings related to document analysis

The following findings were obtained when the interviews, blog posts, books, videos, and social media posts of Aret Vartanyan were analyzed by using the document analysis method. The findings listed below within the scope of the document analysis method reflect the importance the author attaches to digitalization, change-transformation, his commercial perspective on digital assets, and his predictions about the future of digital assets.

- His expression "*The new generation of people is coming 'without an identity'*" is examined, it is understood that he evaluates the digital person as having different characteristics from the information written on their identity cards. While our identities convey who we are through the information they contain, the attributes or possessions that emphasize what we are fall short of fully capturing the essence of our being. Stating that the pandemic is a warning bell, the author emphasizes that those who realize the change and digital transformation will not be deceived when everything seems to be normalizing and emphasizes that those who keep up with the digital world will win.
- The author, who often refers to the concept of transhumanism, states that he believes in the idea that the human species has not completed its development and even represents an early stage in the evolution process, and in augmented human philosophy, which is a current that produces ideas about the future.
- Embracing the perspective of dataism—which posits that the universe is composed of data flows and that the value of any phenomenon or entity is determined by its contribution to, or disruption of, the data processing (i.e., analytical) process—the author also engages in scholarly work on the concepts of singularity and decentralization.
- Stating that "*I no longer want to be passive in the future, I want to be causative.*", the author emphasizes that he follows technological developments closely and already manages his future with his digital assets.
- Saying that "*NFT is a huge opportunity for the people who produce, in my opinion.*", the author states that this technology is not fully understood, and it will take time to become operational, but that it has a very useful mechanism for the people who produce, and that this system should be integrated for the new world order.
- Expressing that "*We have to learn and adapt to the new normal order.*", the author emphasizes that people change without realizing it, and that it is necessary to benefit from technology to continue our work in business and social life.

According to the findings obtained because of the document analysis, in parallel with the interview, it has been determined that individual and corporate codes change rapidly, digital concepts that describe "life facilitating" in the world, the relationship between artificial intelligence, robots and changes in all lanes of technology and personal transformation, the new generation human and the concept of time has become blurred in the new normal order.

In addition, it can be said that Aret Vartanyan's views on digital heritage, obtained through document analysis, coincide with previous studies in the international literature. In the study conducted by Colley (2014) in Australia, technology use and digital heritage issues are discussed from the perspective of digital visualization and the focus is on ethics and sustainability in the new normal order. In a study conducted in East Africa, it is stated that awareness about the protection of digital heritage has increased with the support of civil societies and governments and digital transformation is accepted as a part of life (Mudogo Mutula, 2014). Another study based on a case study of Danish archives and museums with Instagram accounts focuses on digital curation and emphasizes that social media is important for the sustainability of digital cultural heritage (Jensen, 2013). According to the Liang et al. (2021) study, it is emphasized that digital citizenship plays an important role in the management and protection of digital cultural heritage with the developments in information and communication technologies.

In the individual and organizational context, the points that previous studies and Aret Vartanyan's views have in common can be listed as follows: improving flexibility and the ability to adapt to change, keeping up with digitalization, being aware of the importance of digital asset management, and having deeper knowledge about the sustainability of digital assets.

5.2. Findings related to the Interview

The interviewer started by asking how he defined himself.

"We work with many companies individually. But on the corporate side, we work with more than 30 companies. At this point, we mainly provide C-level education. I think many things will change this year. I am moving into two new areas."

In the above section, it is seen how the interviewee briefly defines the brand "Aret Vartanyan", and from the response received, the importance he attaches to "digital, digitalization and change" with the C-level[3] education part he emphasized, which is active in many fields, emerges in parallel with the document analysis given above.

5.2.1. Digital Assets with a Commercial Perspective

Aret Vartanyan states that he has been focusing on digital asset management for many years with a commercial point of view, and this issue has already drawn his attention. In fact, he reproaches here that it is meaningless to discuss whether there is still a digital asset or not. He once again emphasizes digitalization by saying that "*I believe that in the future lives must fit into a computer*". The author Aret Vartanyan talks about his commercial investments in the digital world by saying in the meeting that "*I believe in the digital of real estate. I am trying to buy offices in shopping malls*". He also reveals what a brave investor he is by saying that he started investing in crypto currencies about 10 years ago.

5.2.2. Digital Assets / Heritage Importance

We understand that digital assets and digital heritage are more important than physical assets for the author. The author stated that "*I haven't been evaluating an asset from physical life/world for the last 10 years. I also think that digital assets are valuable for the future of my future and my unborn children. I've been talking about crypto for 10 years, I've been talking about the metaverse*". The author emphasizes that he follows the digital world closely, that technology is next to change, and how important this issue is.

5.2.3. Future of Digital Asset Management / Digital Heir

Aret Vartanyan begins by talking about the uncertainty in his mind on this subject. "*I don't know why I'm thinking about something that happens especially in my dreams. I did not share my passwords with my spouse either. What will happen if I die?*" Here, the author states that the subject is not settled on a concrete basis, that he has difficulty in deciding, and that he does not know exactly what to do. "*Facebook asked the other day if we should close his account after he died... I didn't want to answer*". Aret Vartanyan mentions in the interview that he has not yet identified anyone as a digital heir. He states that he recorded his passwords in a notebook and kept it in a safe, but now he says that "*I didn't do anything for whoever will open it and read it*". Here, the author adds the lack of a system that he finds reliable as a reason for unrest. He talks about a law firm he works for and states that they are working on the legal regulation of crypto money. Still,

[3]The training designed for the needs of managers, presenting the components of the digital world in a comparative way, both in general and in the sector.

he mentions that "*But I do not believe that the current lawmakers will implement a legal infrastructure for us in the short term*" and states that digital asset management will not be put into a system soon.

"I believe in the future of immortality, and I believe that future will come from the digital world. But still, whether it's the world of finance or our generations, the generations before us focus on the basis behind this event. But Microsoft is trying to survive by purchasing post-mortem digital rights. And we are living through the sharpest transition in the existence of human history".

As stated above, the author explains that human beings cannot accept that they are trying to embody digital assets in their current state, on the other hand, he explains that a world giant like Microsoft has invested fearlessly in this field with its visionary perspective.

In another example given by Aret Vartanyan regarding the future of digital asset management, "*Which world we will invest in is what matters. They are very surprised of Todex. Are the banks more reliable, I say? When the bank goes bankrupt, the state protects it up to a maximum of 200,000. What you call a money note is a certificate, an NFT. Its background is empty*". He also mentions that people are afraid of digital assets because they cannot see it as a basis or security. In his predictions about the future of digital assets, the author says that he believes that the field of education will also undergo a rapid change. He adds that he provides training with Tesla-Suit gloves with one of our universities in this field.

"Currently, we are training by touching from a distance with tesla-suit gloves. Two gloves cost 100 thousand dollars, but later, they will be 75 thousand dollars, and then, it will decrease to 100 from 1000 dollars, and we will all start using it."

The author also refers to the supply/demand balance as technology is expensive, but it will become widespread rapidly and the technological tools will become cheaper based on competition.

5.2.4. Digital Assets as a Strategic Competitive Element

In the literature, studies and competitive strategies developed to maintain competitive advantage have a long history. The most accepted of these studies and the subject of many researches is to provide competitive advantage by creating generic strategies belonging to M.Porter. The concept of generic strategy, first put forward by Porter in 1980, explains how a business will create a competitive advantage in a determined market area (Porter, 1980). In this context, the concept of strategy is an action plan that helps the business achieve its goals and is used in the implementation of activities such as resource utilization. The essence of strategy consists in implementing different activities or implementing existing activities differently from competitors. Businesses must constantly develop new ways and methods in order to respond to competitors in a timely manner, to cope with changes in the environment, to meet changing customer expectations and to use existing resources effectively. In the interview with Aret Vartanyan, it becomes evident that he maintains a competitive edge by formulating strategic action plans and demonstrating foresight into future developments.In addition, we understand that the author's mission is to change, renew and remain dynamic as a strategic competitive element. Aret Vartanyan, as an author with a high awareness, mentions that he always invested in this field, as he thought long ago that the future would be entirely digital. Although the concept of metaverse has been introduced very recently, the author mentions that he even started to acquire property over that world, from his knowledge on this subject.

Conveyed through a futuristic (positive future prediction) perspective, the view of the author that "*There will be human beings living in small rooms behind glasses in the world of the future*" is one of the most vivid examples of being a future-oriented, digital person, which have been already written above.

As a result, according to the findings obtained from the interview with the author Aret Vartanyan, it is understood that the author approaches digital assets from a commercial perspective and has made significant investments in this field. According to research by Fidelity Digital Assets, the number of institutional investors adding digital assets to their portfolios is increasing (Kubera,2023).

Vartanyan's view on the future of digital asset management contains uncertainties; He has not yet shared the passwords of his social media accounts with anyone and has not determined a digital heir. Like Vartanyan, Soto (2023) in his article stating the uncertainties in digital asset management focuses on the themes of consistency of metadata management, streamlined workflow, advanced algorithms-analytics and security.

The findings of the study reveal that the concept of digital heritage can be shaped through individual narratives and digital media. The example of Aret Vartanyan shows that individual digital content production can become not only a personal but also a collective cultural heritage element. This finding is consistent with the literature that argues that digital heritage is produced not only through institutional or state-supported archiving practices but also through narratives constructed by individuals in digital environments (Giaccardi, 2012; Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007). Previous studies have generally addressed digital heritage through digital representations of more traditional heritage objects, such as the digitization of museum collections or making historical documents accessible online (Parry, 2007). However, this study shows that digital heritage can also be shaped through digital self-narratives, blog posts, digital publications, and social media content. In addition, the emphasis in the study that digital heritage can be a narrative "left alive" overlaps with contemporary heritage theories that argue that heritage is not only about the past but also a process related to the present (Harrison, 2013). In this context, the findings of the study support the view that heritage is a continuous, negotiable phenomenon and intertwined with the social context (Waterton & Smith, 2010).

6. Conclusion

This research aims to examine the perspective of Aret Vartanyan, a well-known and expert in his field, on the concept of digital heritage on digital platforms. The case study model was applied for this purpose. The case is Aret Vartanyan in this research. Four main themes were obtained through the semi-structured interview and document analysis. These are: digital assets with a commercial perspective, digital assets / heritage importance, future of digital asset management / digital heir, digital assets as a strategic competitive element. The resulting themes can be detailed as follows:

- Vartanyan, who focuses on digital assets from a commercial perspective, stated that he has been purchasing assets from the digital world for many years and that he believes in the digital of real estate, which shows that digital assets have not only a spiritual but also a material/commercial dimension.
- While Vartanyan emphasizes the importance of digital assets and digital heritage, he states that he invests in the metaverse with cryptocurrencies for the future of his children and that he believes in digital asset ownership.
- While explaining his views on the importance of digital asset management, Vartanyan emphasizes the uncertainties arising from the legal infrastructure and the lack of a secure digital asset management system. He also states that he still does not have a clear decision about appointing a legal heir to his digital assets after his death and that he feels uneasy.

- Vartanyan, who sees owning digital assets as a strategic source of competitive advantage, states that our world will be completely digital in the future. Stating that his mission is to change, renew and remain dynamic as a strategic competitive element, the author states that people are still afraid of buying digital assets and do not find them reliable. However, he also emphasizes that those who fear change and innovation will fall behind their competitors.

Existing studies on digital heritage emphasize the need to increase digital heritage awareness and consciousness (Kalusopa and Zulu, 2009; Thwaites, 2013; Varinlioglu et al., 2017). It is very important that digital assets, which have material and spiritual value, are transferred from generation to generation and are sustainable (Green and Svendsen, 2021; Pavlicek and Doucek, 2015). These highlighted points coincide with the findings of our study. At this point, it is recommended that:

Proposition 1: Policy makers and leaders of countries supporting scientific activities for the protection and sustainability of digital cultural heritage can increase digital heritage awareness.

Existing research emphasizes the need to clarify the legal aspects of digital asset management and digital heritage (Mudogo Mutula, 2014; Parilla, 2021). In particular, the legal framework of digital heritage is still evolving, with issues such as user consent, terms of service of platforms, and jurisdiction coming to the fore (Carroll & Romano, 2011). In addition, there is an increasing need for a common legislation regarding posthumous access to digital content and its transfer to heirs (Biyan & Akçil, 2018). Additionally, according to Dinç (2009), legal regulations and wills provide guidance on how to manage digital assets. These findings coincide with Vartanyan's opinion: "The absence of a legal regulation regarding the management of digital assets increases uncertainty by reducing trust in digital assets." At this point, it is recommended that:

Proposition 2: Developing legal regulations and policies for accepting digital assets as inheritance can reduce uncertainty and increase reliability.

Previous research defines digital assets as a concept that emerges as a product of technological developments and finds individual and organizational use (Parrilla 2021; Yang et al., 2023). As an individual usage area, digital assets mean existing in the digital world and having more than one identity in virtual life. Social media accounts, sent messages, texts, images and online shares are reflections of the digital identities people have (Vuckovic and Kanceljak, 2019). From an organizational perspective, it is stated that digitalization increases the efficiency of companies of all sizes (Kuusisto, 2017) and makes them more competitive. As borders disappear in the digital world, organizations need digital assets more due to their corporate functioning and interactions with the environment. Therefore, they are digitalizing their strategies. (Tohanean et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2023). These findings coincide with Vartanyan's thoughts on the importance of keeping up with digitalization. At this point, it is recommended that:

Proposition 3: Strategies that individuals and organizations will implement to transfer their digital assets to future generations can increase individual and organizational brand value.

As a result, it is thought that these findings obtained through the semi-structured interview with Vartanyan and document analysis will make significant contributions to the developing literature on digital heritage. Digital heritage is expected to become an important global trend in the future. The need for individuals and organizations to protect, share and transfer on their digital assets to future generations may encourage the development of new approaches in this field. The management and preservation of digital heritage may emerge as an issue that requires more attention in the coming years. This future is not far away.

7. Practical implication

This study reveals the importance of the subject by increasing the existing knowledge on digital heritage and digital asset management. Examining the perspectives and strategies of Aret Vartanyan, a well-known expert in the field, this study reveals how individuals and organizations perceive the concept of digital assets. Aret Vartanyan's views on digital assets as a strategic competitive element provide valuable information for individuals and organizations who want to understand the potential benefits and risks of digital asset investment. Aret Vartanyan's conclusions regarding the lack of regulation surrounding digital assets highlight a potential area. Policymakers, legal experts, and industry professionals can benefit from this research to better understand the emerging challenges and address the legal aspects of digital asset management and inheritance. Overall, this study can help researchers, practitioners, and policymakers gain deeper insights into digital heritage and the implications of managing and preserving digital assets.

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Author Details

Meri Taksi Deveciyan (Assoc. Prof. Dr.)
[1] İstanbul Kültür University, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, Business Management, İstanbul, Türkiye.
0000-0001-9206-0315 meritaksideveciyan@gmail.com

Hazal Koray Alay (Assoc. Prof. Dr.)
[2] Batman University, Health Services Vocational School, Department of Management and Organization, Batman, Türkiye.
0000-0002-6638-3089 hazalkoray.alay@batman.edu.tr

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Flowchart of Preferred Reporting Items for Document Analysis (Prisma)

DOCUMENT TYPE		DESCRIPTION	SCANNING	EXCLUDING	INCLUDING
Books	Other documents	All books by the author in print	Scanned Publications n=9	Excluded Sources n=9	n=0
Blog Post	Google Database	digitalnetworkalkas.com (n=12) and https://www.milliyet.com.tr/haberleri/aret-vartanyan (n=52)	Scanned Publications n=64	Excluded Sources n=52	n=12
Social Media Account	X(tweeter) social media platform	The keywords “digital” and “digital asset” were scanned between January 2021 and September 2022.	Scanned Publications n=142	Excluded Sources n=0	n=142
Videos	Google Database	[site: youtube.com, “aretvartanyanvedijita]	Scanned Publications n=121	Excluded Sources n=103	n=18
Total					n=172