

## CREATIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN VILNIUS ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE COMMUNICATION

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### Abstract

**Research purpose.** The purpose of this study is to single out the tools of creative communication and to identify which of them are most used in the communication of architectural heritage in Vilnius.

**Design / Methodology / Approach.** Comparative analysis of scientific literature, qualitative expert interviews.

**Findings.** The communication of the architectural heritage is multifaceted because the heritage is multifunctional. Heritage communication operates through various channels and is focused on different target groups; however, in order for the communication to be effective, as expected, the coherence of communication is required, as well as a comprehensive approach to all aspects of communication. Structured communication is essential for the best communication impact.

**Originality / Value / Practical implications.** Heritage communication is an actively developing field that is receiving increasing attention from scientists and the public. Much attention is paid to heritage during various cultural events, during which the public has the opportunity to get acquainted with the usually inaccessible heritage or its premises. In this way, the revitalisation of heritage involves urban residents, communities, interested groups who, for cultural, religious or other reasons, are concerned with heritage preservation. Although much attention is paid to heritage communication and sponsors are being attracted, there are fears that the communication of architectural heritage is not sufficient due to the lack of funding for architectural heritage. The consequence of the lack of funding is the disappearance of architectural objects. Thus, the analysis of architectural heritage communication is a relevant and researched topic.

**Keywords:** Culture; Heritage; Technology; Creativity.

**JEL codes:** L83.

### Introduction

Communication is a science, an interdisciplinary field that requires a combination of multidisciplinary approaches. Effective and continuous communication is ensured by companies and organisations for which it is important to sell a product, promote an event or attract investment in cultural heritage (Ciurea & Filip, 2019). Communication is widely studied by scholars, but heritage communication, which is linked to a variety of heritage information, is explored in a fragmented way.

The problem of this research is to define what are the tools of creative communication and to single out which of the tools of creative communication can be used communicating in architectural and cultural heritage in Vilnius. Creative communication tools are a relatively new approach to communication. They provide an opportunity to improve existing communication processes and adapt them to the social habits of the current social groups (Ciurea & Filip, 2019). In the communication of architectural heritage, creative tools of communication such as the use of digital content and the introduction of new technologies allow the architectural heritage to be presented to the public in an innovative way attracting interest to various groups of society. The current research differs from other pieces of research because of its object, that is, the analysed tools of creative communication. Prior to this research, it was not investigated which of the creative tools of communication are most applicable imparting Vilnius architectural and cultural heritage. During the current research, the city of Vilnius was chosen because

of its size, as it is the largest city in Lithuania. Vilnius was also chosen because of its historical centre is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List as a unique example of a city formed in the Middle Ages; therefore, all architectural objects in this historical centre must be protected according to UNESCO World Heritage List instructions. This shows that it is crucial to study the case of communication of Vilnius city architectural heritage.

Heritage communication is communication that is transmitted to the public through various channels. Communication not only helps to popularise the heritage object but also contributes to its preservation and attracts investment (Xue, 2019). There are many architectural and cultural heritage objects in Vilnius that are disappearing because there is too little communication about them or the communication message is not attractive to the visitor. In order to increase the accessibility of heritage information to a wider circle of visitors and make the communication message more attractive, it is proposed to use more creative tools of communication. Introducing technology to communication does not suffice in aiming at applying new, creative tools of communication; using the human factor is also required – art installations, performances, workshops. Such a division of creative communication (use of technologies and adaptation of artistic forms) describes the creative tools of heritage communication (Aragón et al., 2019; Šerić, 2020). It is noted that aforementioned tools are already being used in heritage communication but are not fully developed, and have not been used to their full potential. Due to inadequate and insufficiently creative communication of architectural heritage, visitors lose interest in heritage, and architectural objects disappear (Raptis et al., 2019). Thus, the aim of this article is to single out the tools of creative communication and to identify which of them are most used in the communication of architectural heritage in Vilnius. The first part of the article presents selected tools of creative communication as the most applicable for communicating architectural and cultural heritage. In the second part, qualitative research of expert interviews was carried out, which aimed at analysing the specifics of architectural heritage communication in Vilnius and identify which of the presented creative communication tools are most used in architectural heritage communication in Vilnius. The last part of the article is devoted to conclusions and suggestions.

### **Literature review**

In today's tourism industry, it is not enough to just offer visitors a variety of cultural events. It is important to understand that the supply of such cultural events is ample, the visitor has an extensive choice; therefore, it is crucial to look for new creative tools of attraction through which the visitor can personally engage and be influenced by the medium through which information is conveyed (Swensen & Nomeikaite, 2019). This comparative analysis of scientific literature and strategic documents aims to answer two questions: what creative communication is and what creative communication tools are already used to communicate architectural heritage.

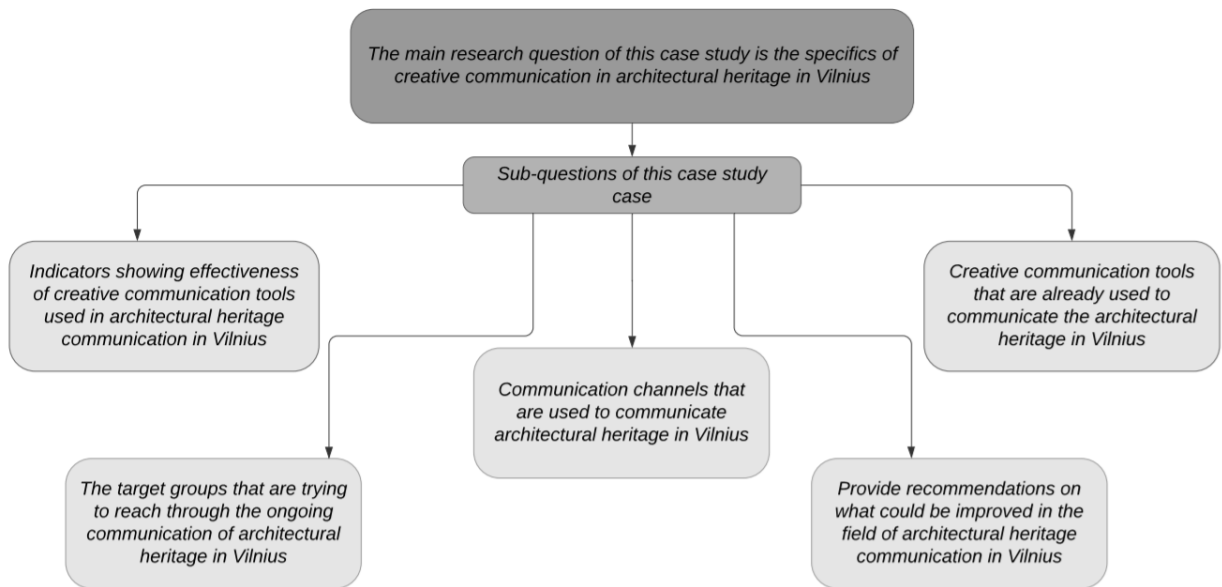
Understanding effective communication as a source of transmitted information about the object and the target audience thus reached, it is necessary to single out the tools of creative communication through which information reaches the public. In this article, creativity is perceived as a new, original, innovative tool, an art form through which heritage is communicated (Saris, 2020; Smaliukienė & Survilas, 2018). Creative tools of communication are identified as the use of new technologies and artistic forms in heritage communication (Park & Kim, 2021; Šerić, 2020). The importance of new technologies in heritage communication is also emphasised by strategic documents regulating heritage preservation. The ICOMOS doctrine recommends preserving, restoring and strengthening the heritage using new technologies (Markevičienė et al., 2017). The Faro Convention encourages investment in new technologies, thus increasing the accessibility of heritage and its protection (Faro Convention, 2005). One of the key principles in UNESCO Commission documents is to strengthen the creative industries by emphasising the diversity of heritage, which is identified as a driving force for development not only in terms of economic development but also in terms of intellectual, emotional, moral, technological and spiritual development (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2005). The use of the new technologies, 3D technologies, is related to communication is also supported by the scientific literature. Growing technologies play a vital role in today's world. They allow information to be shared not only quickly and efficiently but also creatively so that the information transmitted leaves a lasting impression. It is

the visual language presented by 3D technology that delivers information in a modern way which can also be applied in the communication of architectural heritage (Poudel & Roy, 2019). It is the use of 3D technologies in heritage illumination that puts the architect's ideas to life without recreating the entire architectural object; properly selected technologies highlight the most important parts of the object, allowing to see the overall territory (Fabola et al., 2017). According to Esposito & Ricci (2020) and Bernárdez et al. (2019), the use of digitisation of heritage information is the best ways to present and preserve heritage. This also applies to the architectural heritage, digitising its individual parts and then integrating them into a common whole, and later presenting them to the public. Such digitised heritage content is applied in the creation of a variety of platforms through which the architectural and cultural heritage is presented in an innovative and attractive way by means of technology (Bräuchler, 2019; Eliëns et al., 2007). Analysing the scientific literature and strategic documents regulating heritage protection, the following tools of creative communication were singled out as the most applicable for communicating architectural heritage: illumination of architectural heritage using 3D installations, use of digitised architectural heritage content in communication, the opening of closed architectural heritage sites through inclusive creative works.

### Research methodology

Lithuanian heritage communication is a widely analysed topic (Lauzikas et al., 2018; Makhotina, 2020; Markevičienė et al., 2017; Rudokas, 2013). Still, the application of creative communication tools in the communication of architectural heritage in Vilnius has not been analysed so far. Therefore, this case study fills the research gap in the field of Lithuanian heritage communication research with creative communication tools to impart architectural heritage in Vilnius.

The main research question of this case study is the specifics of creative communication in architectural heritage in Vilnius. In order to answer this core research question, sub-questions have been developed, which are depicted in Figure 1.

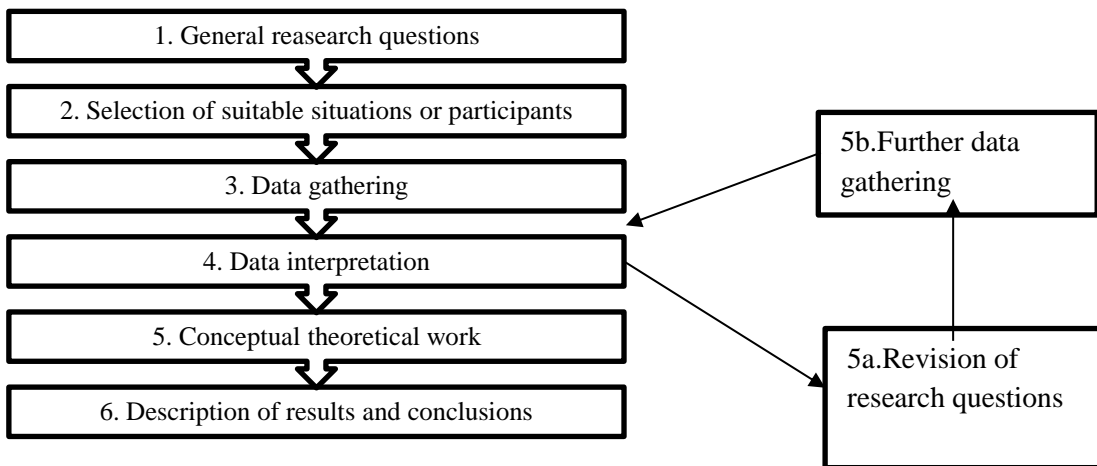


**Fig. 1. Questionnaire development** (Source: Compiled by the author)

Qualitative expert interviews were chosen in the study because of the aim of the research, which seeks to single out creative tools of communication and identify which of them are most used in the communication of architectural heritage in Vilnius. In order to identify and describe creative tools of architectural heritage communication, the expert interview was conducted by reaching the experts directly.

In order to determine the criteria, the interview questions were formulated, interviewees were chosen, an analysis of the scientific literature was performed, and a qualitative study of expert interviews was prepared. Upon the analysis of the scientific literature, a qualitative study of expert interviews was completed.

An interview is the most widely used method of collecting qualitative research data. It is similar to the conversation method but is more formal and specific. During the process, the interviews require participants to answer questions accurately and in detail (Barrado-Timón et al., 2020; Creswell et al., 2016; Ladores, 2020). In order for the research process to be successful, a logical diagram was created, which depicts the qualitative research process (see Figure 2).



**Fig. 2. Qualitative research process** (Source: Compiled by the author based on Bryman (2008))

Following this sequence of the process, the subjectivity and bias of the interviewees, which is mentioned by many researchers being the biggest drawback of this study, can be at least partially avoided.

*Structure of the research instrument.* The interview plan consisted of 5 open-ended questions aimed at finding out the specifics of architectural heritage communication. All interviewees were asked the same questions before the interview, and interviewees were given prior access to the interview questions upon request. The case study was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews, i.e. the obligatory and the optional questions with the help of which the interview was conducted were set in advance. The questions were clarified and explained at the request of the interviewees, and examples were provided. A direct interview was conducted, i.e. one expert was interviewed during one interview.

*Sample validity.* One of the most important tasks is to select the appropriate number of experts because the reliability of the study results depends on it. The number of interviewees is selected based on the recommendations of Libby and Blashfield (1978). The authors state that the number of experts should be between five and nine. The reason for this is the accuracy of the expert assessment of a small group. Below is a graph of the correlation between the number of experts and the reliability of the study results. Rudzkienė (2009) also proposes interviewing 5-9 experts in a sample of experts for qualitative research.

Based on the recommendations of Libby and Blashfield (1978) and Rudzkienė (2009), five interviewees were interviewed during the semi-structured interview. The subjects were selected by the following criteria: they had to work in the institutions operating in Vilnius, which are responsible for the preservation and communication of architectural heritage as communication experts/specialists. The research was attended by communication specialists from five leading institutions in Vilnius, responsible for the preservation and communication of architectural heritage, who expressed a common

opinion on the communication of architectural heritage in Vilnius. The positions of these interviewees, the title of the institution in which they work and the characteristics of the position are given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Characteristics of interviewees** (Source: Compiled by the author)

Nr.	Position	Institution	Job characteristics
E1	Senior specialist of communication/Exhibition curator	National Art Gallery	Responsible for communication in the National Art Gallery.
E2	Senior specialist of communication	State commission of Cultural Heritage	Responsible for communication in Heritage and Strategic Planning Department.
E3	Communication department coordinator	National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania	Responsible for the communication in Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania
E4	Senior specialist of communication /Vilnius city guide	Vilnius city municipality	Responsible for communication in Culture Department.
E5	Communication manager	Institute of Literature and Folklore of Lithuania	Responsible for the publicity and communication in the Institute of Literature and Folklore of Lithuania.

The results of the qualitative research were analysed by the method of content analysis, distinguishing categories and subcategories. The systematisation of the results obtained for the main categories was also performed. According to Bitinas et al. (2008), qualitative content analysis is a qualitative diagnostic tool that includes four certain steps:

- recurring trends highlighted;
- the transcripts of the interviewees’ answers are read many times, distinguishing the essential categories according to certain “keywords”;
- semantic elements are identified, the content of some categories is broken down, distinguishing the main elements;
- semantic elements are divided into subcategories, and content data are interpreted;

Based on the aforementioned stages, interviewees’ answers were analysed.

### **Research results**

Regarding the creative tools of communication that are already used to communicate the architectural and cultural heritage in their institution, the interviewees singled out five main ones, which are presented and described in Table 2. As can be seen from the data in Table 2, the first four tools, i.e. virtual reality, 3D technologies, heritage illumination and heritage digitisation, are all related to the use of innovative technologies in communicating heritage. The interviewees emphasised in their responses the importance of introducing new technologies into heritage communication. Another important aspect highlighted by the respondents was the possible opening of closed sites to the public. The Vilnius Open House festival was singled out as an example of such practice; what is more, the opinion was expressed that state institutions, which are located in historic buildings, should allow visitors during various activities. The example of the opening of such sites was provided by the senior specialist of the State Commission of Cultural Heritage. The respondent told about the various quizzes organised by their institution, during which the participants are shown their premises and the history of the building is told. A similar activity, carried out by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, was told about by the respondent, who

is responsible for the communication in this institution. The respondent said that various literary evenings are organised in their institution, during which their participants have the opportunity to see the normally closed premises of the institute. During such activities, it is possible to see the interiors of usually closed buildings.

**Table 2. Creative communication tools** (Source: Compiled by the author)

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Description</b>
Virtual reality	Communication uses virtual reality glasses, which tell a story.
3D technology	A 3D scanner scans certain individual architectural objects, the matrices of which are used in education to present heritage objects.  Models of architectural objects are made with a 3D printer, are used in museums as an alternative to information stands.
Heritage illumination	Festival of Lights in Vilnius, during which various architectural objects are illuminated.  A light installation in the Reformers Square - "Luther's Rose" - created to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.
Heritage digitalisation	An app is being created with the photos of gone buildings to present visual information of what the part of the city one is passing through used to look like.  A website is being created using a scanned archive of drawings and blueprints by architect Jonas Mulokas.
Increasing public access to closed sites	During the Vilnius Open House festival, visitors can visit more interesting architectural buildings, most of which are usually closed to visitors or have a very limited number of visitors.  Special initiatives of state institutions, during which the visitor is given the opportunity to inspect the interior of the architectural object.

Summarising the creative tools of communication of architectural heritage, which are already used to communicate architectural heritage, it can be concluded that a great deal of attention is paid to state-of-the-art technologies. It is the use of the latest technologies in communication, conservation and restoration of heritage that is also recommended in the strategic documents on heritage conservation. Thus, it can be deduced that Lithuanian state institutions follow the European recommendations and implement them in practice.

After discussing the creative tools of communication that are used to communicate architectural heritage, it is important to discuss the effectiveness of these measures as well. During the interviews, the interviewees were asked to name indicators showing the effectiveness of creative communication tools used in architectural heritage communication. The respondents singled out the following indicators: formation of a long-term connection, establishment of secondary contacts, and formation of feedback.

The majority of the interviewees singled out the formation of a long-term connection when the same visitors regularly visit the architectural heritage sites and participate in the activities organised in them. The interviewees noted that such connection is mainly formed with students who are constantly involved in various educational activities, and seniors who participate in third-age university activities through which architectural heritage is presented.

Another important indicator covered by the interviewees is the establishment of secondary contacts. Activities related to the communication of architectural heritage involve constant cooperation with various institutions, organisations or simply private individuals who provide filming, photography or

other technical services. A specialist working at the State Commission of Cultural Heritage shared information that in organising photography exhibitions, they cooperate with university and college students who photograph architectural sites for the exhibition. This connection is mutually beneficial - it gives students first-hand experience, and the institution gets a quality product to use in communication.

The third efficiency indicator singled out by the interviewees is the formation of feedback. Experts describe this indicator as receiving some kind of feedback from a visitor. After the event, during which the architectural heritage was presented, the visitor expresses his/her opinion to the organisers of the event. Opinions are usually expressed via e-mails or comments on social media. The opinion expressed is not always positive, but it shows that the visitor has been reached, it is relevant to him. Expressed remarks, advice or thanks are very important; they help to improve, understand the needs of the visitor, they motivate to work.

After discussing the indicators showing the effectiveness of communication tools, it can be seen that special attention is paid to the formation of long-term connection and feedback with the visitor and the cooperation that occurs after the activities.

Interviewees were asked what communication channels are used to communicate in their institutions. All case study respondents singled out social networks as the main communication channel used to reach society most effectively and quickly. Interviewees singled out three social networks in which the institutions they represent have accounts and post information: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter.

Another channel of communication mentioned is articles in the media. However, this communication channel was mentioned by only one institution, which provides information to the media about the events organised. Other interviewees stated that providing articles to the media or communicating information about the event on the television is expensive, so these communication channels are practically not used in reality or are used minimally depending on the importance of the information and the scope of the event.

The interviewees also mentioned that communication takes place on the websites of their institutions, where information about upcoming and past events, seminars, lectures, etc., is published. The aim is to present the information as simply as possible, to divide it into sections so that it is convenient for the visitor to use it, to make the page informative and user-friendly.

Summarising the communication channels mentioned by the interviewees, it can be seen that social networks are the main communication channel; however, it is not fully exploited, as only three main social networks are mentioned, experts of case study institutions do not use other social media, or institutions do not have accounts in them. Due to the high costs, the media is rarely used as a communication channel. Communication is also carried out on the institutions' websites. They try to provide information as simply as possible so that the visitor can find the information they need conveniently and quickly.

During the interviews, the interviewees were asked to name the target groups that their institutions are trying to reach through the ongoing communication of architectural heritage. The following target groups were identified: the public, pupils, students, individual visitors. In answering this question, most interviewees first mentioned that they do not have one target group because it is important for them to reach the whole society. This is because the interviewees work in state institutions, one of the functions of which is to inform the public about their activities. However, when asked to specify certain target groups at which events, lectures or other activities are targeted, the respondents clarified and identified pupils and students for educational activities, interactive games, quizzes, competitions, as well as seniors whose activities are mainly related to third-age university activities. These are usually seminars, lectures, book presentations, etc. It was also mentioned that the communication carried out is also intended to keep in touch with regular visitors in an effort to involve them on a regular basis in the activities carried out by the same site.

Upon the summary of the received answers, it can be concluded that communication is aimed at the whole society, and the specific events are aimed at attracting different target groups to the architectural heritage. The interviewees singled out pupils, students and seniors as their main target groups.

The interviewees were asked to provide recommendations on what could be improved in the field of architectural heritage communication. As can be seen from the recommendations and expert comments in Table 3, there is a strong focus on public involvement through volunteering and public involvement in amateur heritage research.

**Table 3. Interviewees’ recommendations** (Source: Compiled by the author based on the answers of the interviewees)

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Interviewee’s comment</b>
To provide quality content through communication	...it is very important to provide people with quality content...“
To engage people in amateur heritage research	„...amateur involvement in heritage communication <...>, “An Intelligent Strategy in 21st Century” announces that many people are happy to engage in amateur heritage research, but it would be possible to organise that activity directly ...”
To act at the more political level	„ ... we need to work at different levels, the best strategy is to do something in more than one direction, to act in all directions <...> at the political level we really need more democracy <...> heritage protection in Lithuania is still perceived as a task of a state institution, not for society as a whole ...”
To encourage volunteering	“... volunteering could be one of the areas that need to be improved, pupils really need to be activated to make them more aware of and interested in heritage ...” “... volunteering for pupils ... during the summer holidays, students could do various internships in a museum or other site ...”
To improve communication in social media	“... we also need to make the best possible use of the new tools that the world is now using - social networks, they are an alternative to official media ...”
To introduce the society to science departments	“... the public should be better acquainted with the scientific departments and their work, show how restorers, archaeologists, dendrologists work ...” “... the public could see how the whole heritage conservation process takes place”

It is also proposed to improve the quality of the content of the communication, as well as to communicate more on social networks, as it is substituting the traditional media. It is suggested to act at a more political level in order to bring together all the interested groups into the communication of the architectural heritage, to act at as wide of a scope as possible, in different directions. Authorities should assist communities by teaching them how to communicate architectural heritage properly. It is proposed to acquaint the public with the whole process of heritage restoration, to open scientific departments that carry out the preservation of architectural heritage.

### **Conclusions**

The analysed case study demonstrates that the following creative communication tools to communicate architectural and cultural heritage in Vilnius already used architectural heritage illumination, 3D installations, digital heritage content, and opened closed architectural heritage sites through inclusive activities. This case study fills the research gap of Lithuanian heritage communication research with creative communication tools to communicate architectural heritage in Vilnius.



Regarding the indicators showing the effectiveness of communication tools, it can be seen that special attention is paid to the formation of long-term communication and feedback with the visitor and the cooperation that occurs after the activities.

The communication of the architectural heritage is multifaceted because the heritage is multifunctional. Heritage communication works through various channels and is focused on different target groups; however, in order for the communication to be effective, it requires consistency of communication and an integrated approach to all aspects of communication. Structured communication is essential for the best communication impact. Depending on the analysed case study, it is proposed to develop the coherence of communication by creating a constant flow of information on social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter), providing more information on the context of architectural heritage (ongoing activities related to cultural, architectural heritage) to interest audience and involve it in heritage protection activities.

It is recommended that Lithuanian state institutions, responsible for heritage preservation, develop inter-institutional cooperation (between institutions responsible for heritage protection and involving representatives of the education and cultural sectors and creative industries), train employees responsible for architectural heritage communication processes, hone their competencies in working with creative tools of communication.

Although Lithuanian state institutions, responsible for heritage protection, perform the communication functions for architectural heritage and use creative tools of communication, the use of the latter is not developed and is limited to fragmented initiatives. The lack of specialised knowledge, specialists and resources are cited as the reasons for underdeveloped creative communication in the field of cultural heritage.

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