

‘Kak eto po-russki?’
Transliteration in Russian-
medium online communication
across the Baltic states and
formation of local standards

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Research background

- Multilingual practices, although extremely diverse and often perceived as chaotic, tend to follow certain trends and patterns sometimes resulting in emergence of local sub-standards and communication norms.
- Digital communication nowadays constitutes a significant part of human interaction. Participation in various online communities creates numerous opportunities for both maintaining and changing certain linguistic practices. Minority languages speakers, in particular, can connect with fellow speakers online and use their mother tongue even if they have to predominantly use the majority language in their everyday life.
- Transliteration is a complex phenomenon employed to represent written form of one language through the means of another graphic system. It can be regulated by certain standards, or occur spontaneously.

Research object

- The Baltic region, characterized by its linguistic diversity and historical intricacies, serves as a unique backdrop for investigating the ways in which Russian speakers navigate linguistic boundaries in the digital space and create new ways of employing strategies of linguistic hybridization. The growing number of native Russian speakers educated not in their mother tongue means that their literacy in Russian cannot anymore be taken for granted.
- Considering the fact that all majority languages in the Baltic countries (Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian) use alphabets based on Latin but with different modifications, Russian speakers in informal written communication, when not able or not willing to use Cyrillic alphabet, may apply different transliteration rules, both conventional and non-conventional.

Examples from online communication



Tatjana Kulinskaja
Это жук.

16 ч. Нравится
Ответить

8 🍌🤔



Marina Roy
Klop drugoi...eto zuk

16 ч. Нравится
Ответить

9 🍌



Марина Кенигсберг
Конечно клоп. Зимой не может быть никаких древесных жуков . Они все спят. 😊

16 ч. Нравится

5 🍌🤔



Арвид Турлай
Tam sideli dezhurnyje -
obychno predpensionново
vozrasta...a konkretnoodno
vremja v nachale 80 h , moi
sosed Anton - on kogda byl
adjutantом „Bacyla,, i
vsegda na prazdniki
ugoschal vseh jevo vinom.....

1 дн. Нравится
Ответить

1 🍌



Алексей Артамонов
[Арвид Турлай](#) святой
человек 🙌

1 дн. Нравится
Ответить

1 🤔



Ilona Kodiene
Super master, rekomenduju!
Vcera u menia bil, stolko
vsego otremontiroval, i
sekciju, i skafi, i rozetku.

16 ч. Нравится
Ответить



Olga Vaičiulytė
Здравствуйте. Может кому
то пригодится
информация. Нашли такой
аккуратный блок у нас
(продавец , Elmega). По
интернету. Ещё видели, что
есть в Латвии. Подошёл
идеально. Искали для
родственников. Они очень
довольны.

Will be there new local conventions?

- **“Problematic letters”: Ы, Я, Ю, Ё, Ъ, Ь, Ж, Ц, Ч, Ш, Щ, Х, Э and different solutions.**
- **High level of variation even on individual level.**
- **Ambiguity of the difference between transliteration and transcription.**
- **Blurring the differences between native and non-native language use.**
- **Some tendencies towards local conventionalization.**
- **Suggestions for further studies: quantitative analysis of the online data across countries and individual users; collecting and analysing experimental data (transformation experiments in three countries among speakers with different educational background)**

Research design

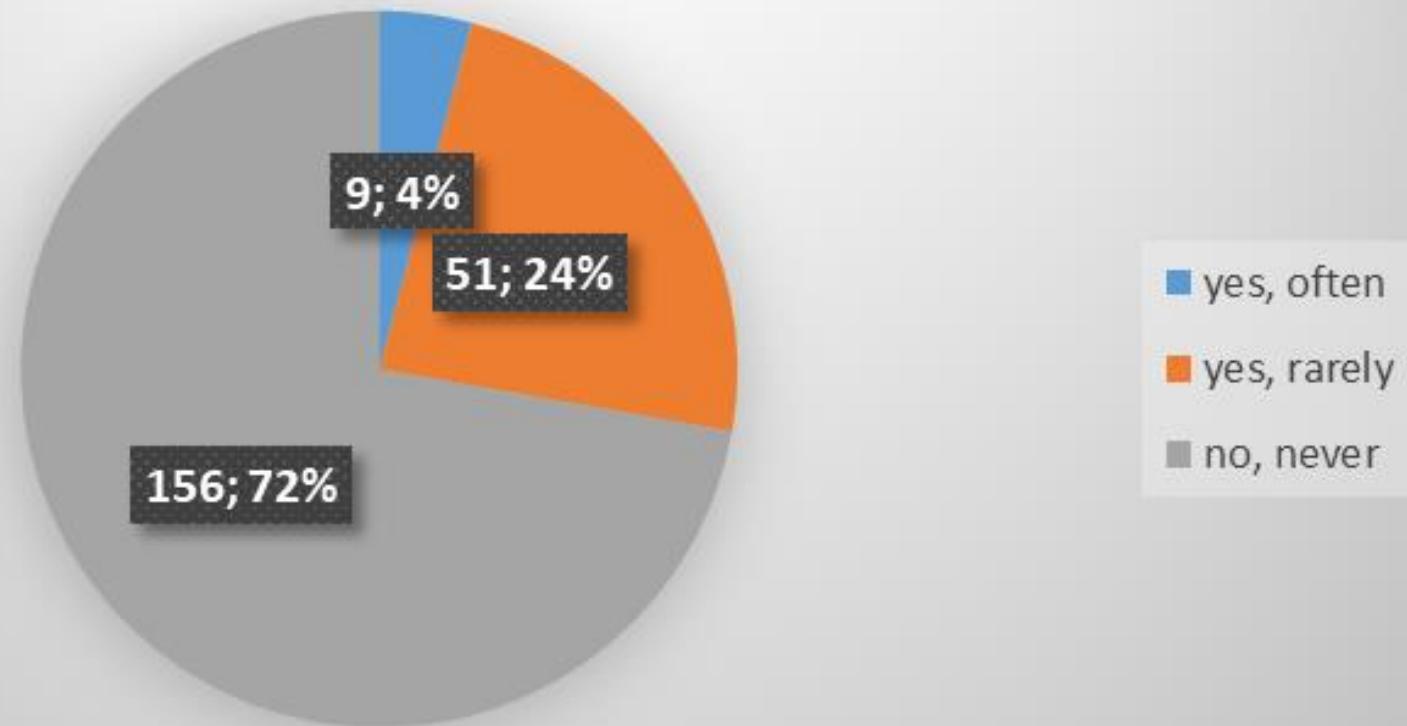
- Online form with three blocks of questions:
 - Personal information (gender, age, country of residence, language of education)
 - Use of transliteration in everyday communication and attitudes to such practices
 - Transformation task:

*Эфиопская флегматичная верблюдица
жyёт y подъезда засыхающий горький шиповник.*

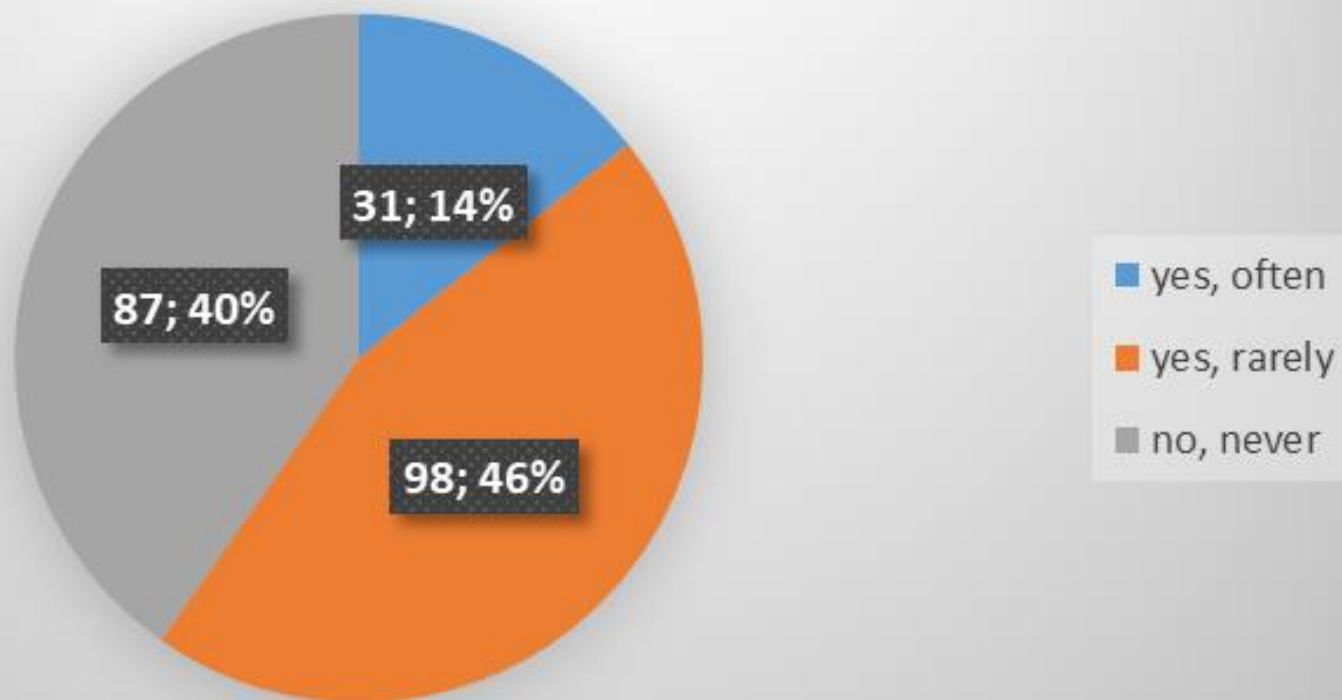
Research participants

- **Country:** 75 from Estonia, 83 from Latvia, 58 from Lithuania
- **Gender:** 64% females, 36% males
- **Age:** 11% under 18; 28% - 19-25; 29% - 26-35; 13% - 36-45; 9% - 46-55; 10% - over 55
- **Languages of education:**
 - Estonia. 54 Russian, 36 Estonian, 4 Ukrainian, 3 English, 1 each Latvian, Belarusian, German, Kazakh
 - Latvia. 54 Russian, 62 Latvian, 12 English, 2 Lithuanian
 - Lithuania. 44 Russian, 25 Lithuanian, 3 English, 2 Polish

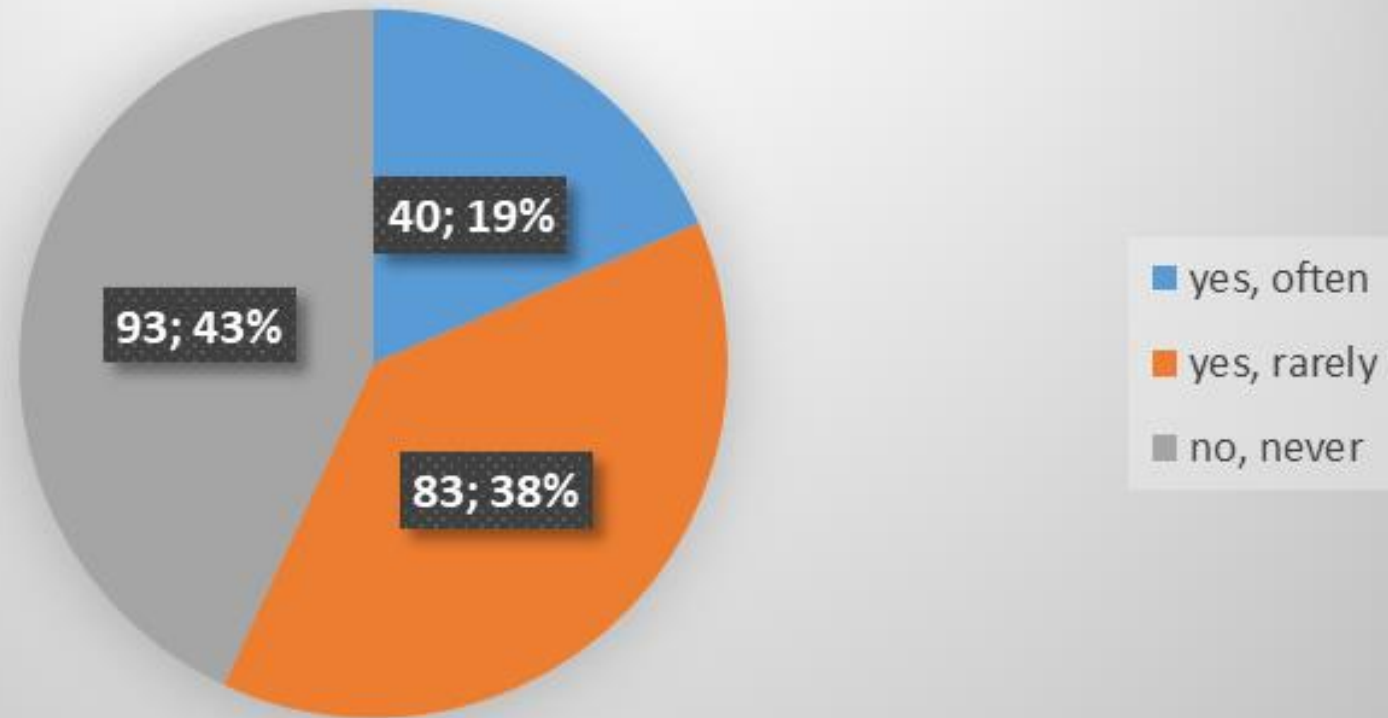
Do you use transliteration in handwriting?



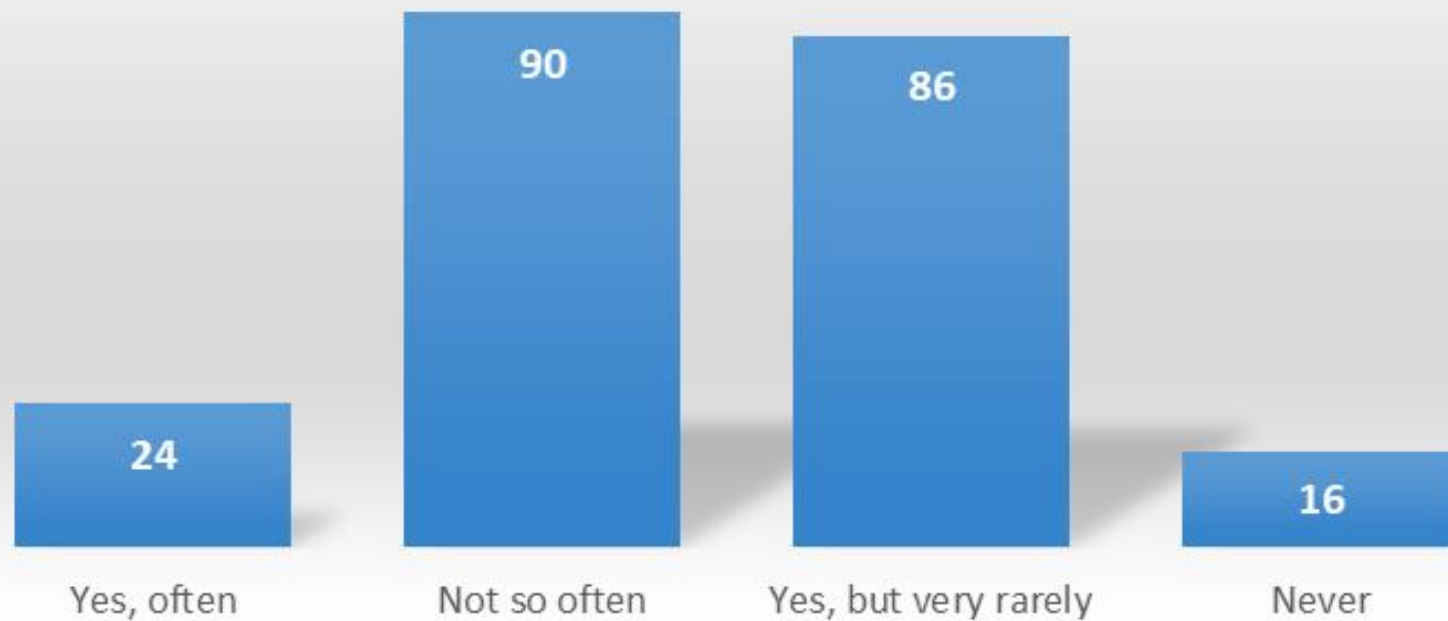
Do you use transliteration when writing on a smartphone?



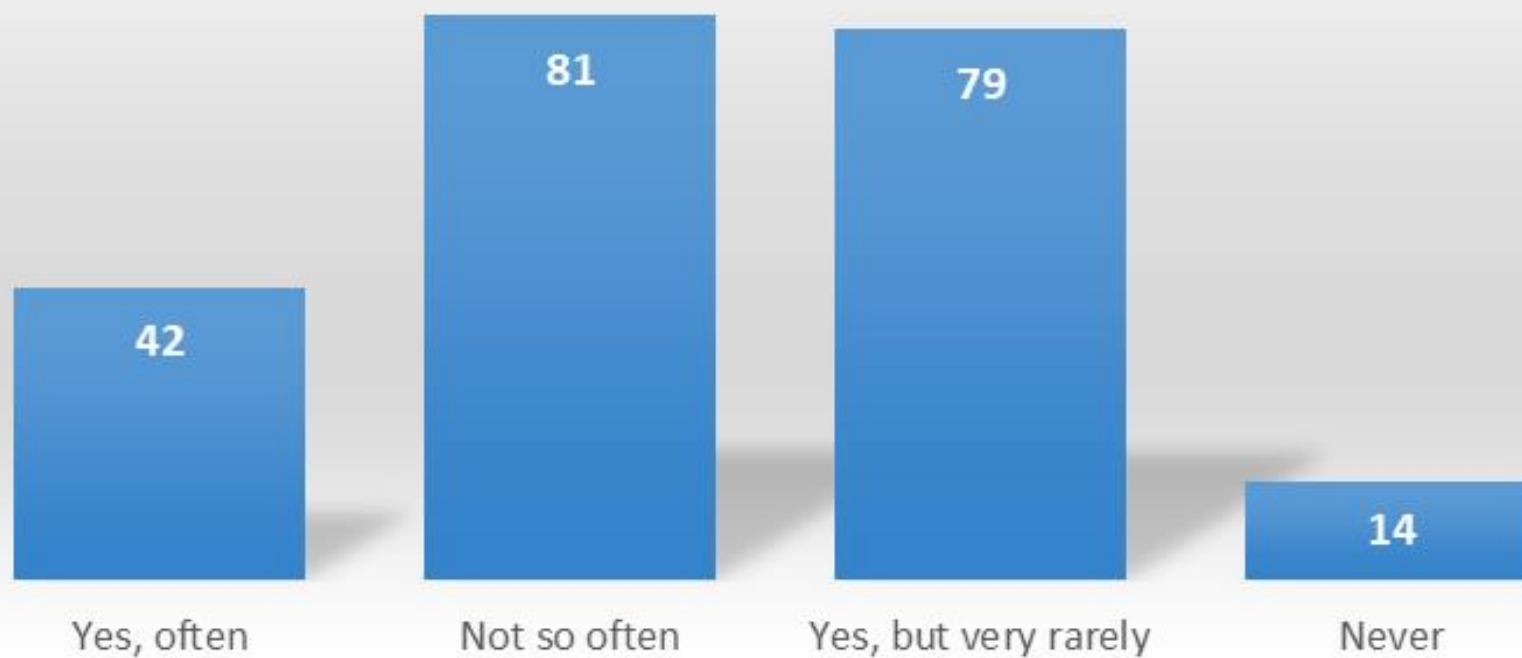
Do you use transliteration when writing on a computer?



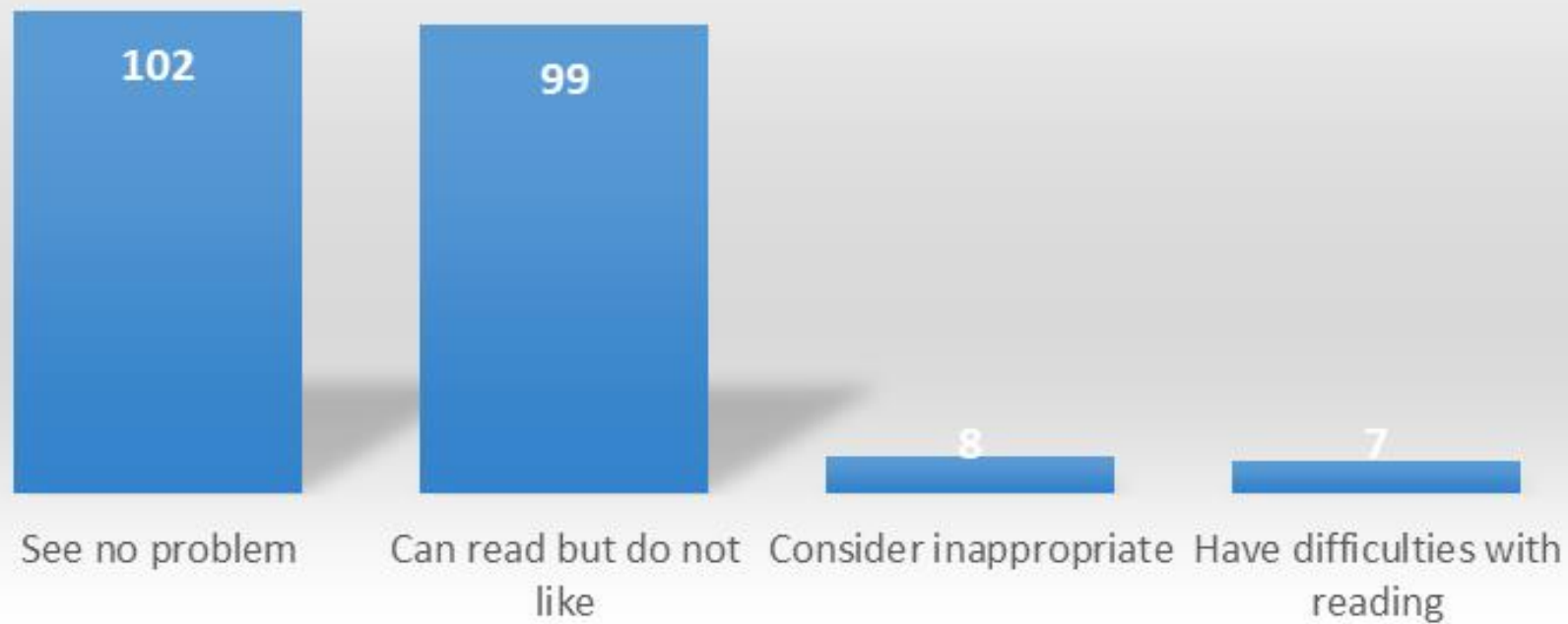
Do you encounter transliteration in social media?



Do you encounter transliteration in messengers?



What is your attitude to transliterated texts?



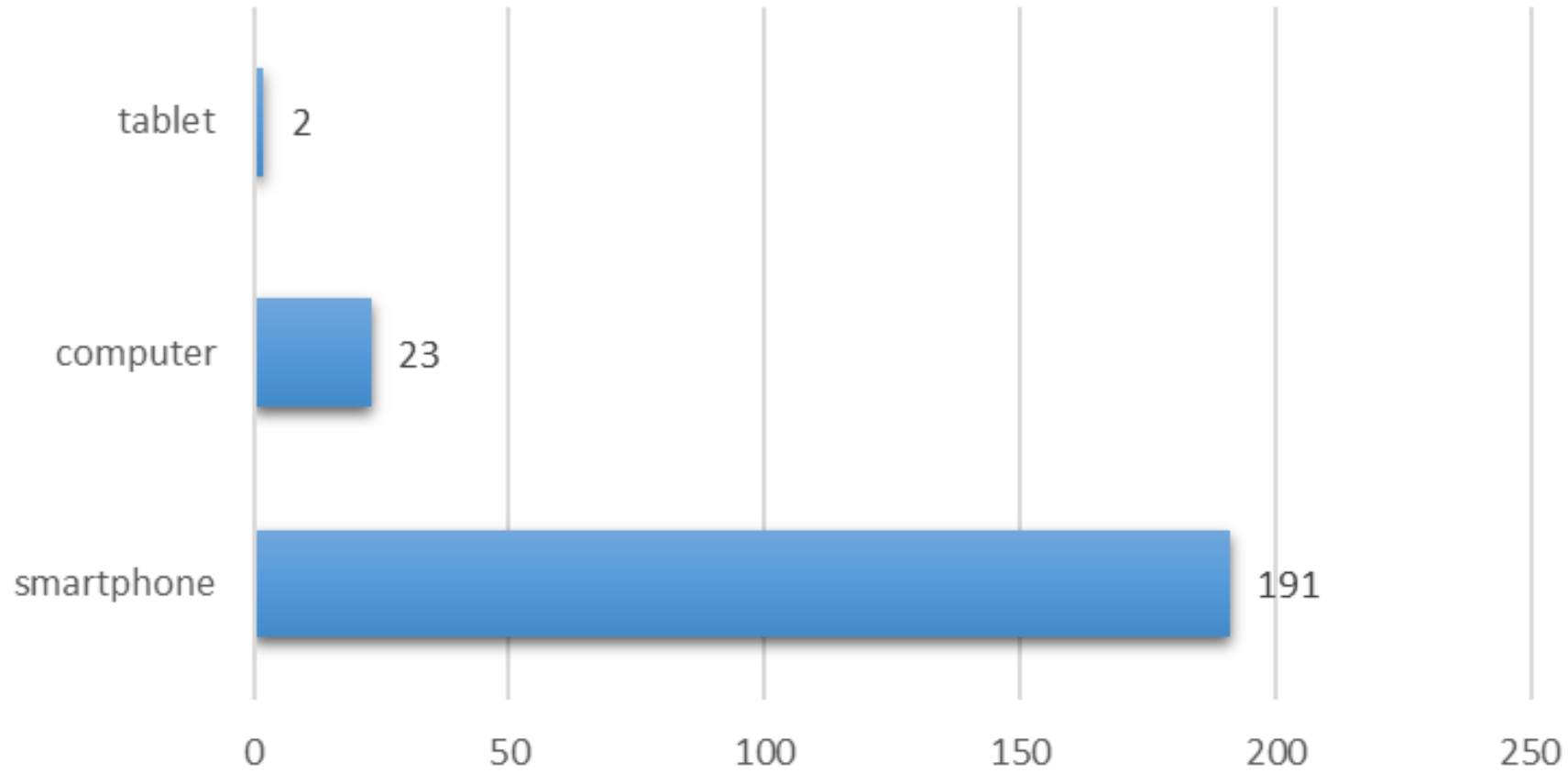
Realization of some “problematic letters”

- **Ч** - **ch** (142), c (13), **4** (22), th (1), ć (1), kh (1), č (9)
- **Ж** - **zh** (117), ž (19), z (51), w (2), š (1), zch (1), ź (1), dz (1), j (3)
- **Ш** - **sh** (154), 6 (4), **w** (10), š (18), s (10), š. (1), sch (2), sz (1)
- **Щ** - **shch** (8), sts (1), **sh** (66), sch (2), w (1), š (5), s (8), ch (1), ść (1), sč (2)
- **Х** - **h** (165), **kh** (11), x (10), ch (9)
- **Ц** - **ts** (40), **c** (154), ch (1), z (2), tc
- **Ю** - **yu** (24), **ju** (97) – **Est+Lat**, u (27), **iu** (45) **Lit**, ü (2), jy (2), iiy (1)
- **Я** - **ya** (45), **ja** (142), ia (1)
- **Ы** - **y** (68) - **Lit**, **i** (109) - **Lat**, q (10), o (2), õ (9) – **all Est**

Preliminary conclusions

- Preference to the simplest solutions: “English” digraphs instead of local letters with diacritics, but simplification of “English” transliteration when possible
- Local norms formation can be attested only in several limited cases (*io=iu* for Lithuania, *u=ts /c* for Estonia, *vi=i* for Latvia and *y* for Lithuania while for Estonia there is *õ* and its substitutions)
- “SMS” letters (*ч=4*, *ш=w*) are losing popularity

What device did you use for this survey?



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