



Everything I Bought
and How It Made Me Feel

Annual Report (Jan – Dec)

Descriptions of A Year-Long Log of Purchases

<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Noun</u>	<u>Conjunction</u>
sloppy	crapshoot	of
open	parody	into
miserable	performance	held up to
late capitalist	adventure	at
creaking	inconsistency	approaching
broken	microphone	undermining
drawn out	neurosis	attempt to mine
appalling	anxiety	
consumer	machine	
pathetic	self	
swag	litany	
everyday	defiance	
neoliberal	paradox	
optimistic	supermarket	
pessimistic	accidents	
doomed	car crash	
tired	joke	
failed	exhaustion	
absurd	diary	
endurance	budget	
agential	endeavour	
potato	study	
lo-res	heart	
self-help	essay	
daily	probe	
lo-res	praxis	
repetitive	ideal	
loser	shot	
	gun	
	hope	

Note: select one noun, and then optionally one adjective; chain together with appropriate conjunctions and articles as desired, e.g. “a consumer probe”, “a paradox of doomed anxiety”, “a potato self”.

Everything I Bought

The total spend for the year 2014 was:

£19,277.26

what does it mean to expose this figure / i am gripped with fear about how it will be perceived / my first instinct is to point out that this is a figure including business expenses / my life and my business being hopelessly intertwined / and so does not accurately reflect my income and lifestyle / i do not want to seem immodest / the mean income in my country is £26,500 / the living wage is £16,328 / i remind myself of these numbers whenever my hair shirt prematurely kicks in / and then i worry again / that because i admit i start worrying about how my income is perceived when it is fractionally above the living wage / i am shaming people who have perfectly reasonable incomes that are higher still / because although i have a hair shirt mind / i do not believe i should have a hair shirt mind / and i think everyone deserves to live better than i let myself live / even though most of us cannot afford to / who is that us / i struggle to put all these numbers in the right perspective / they still seem impossible to me / all of them impossible

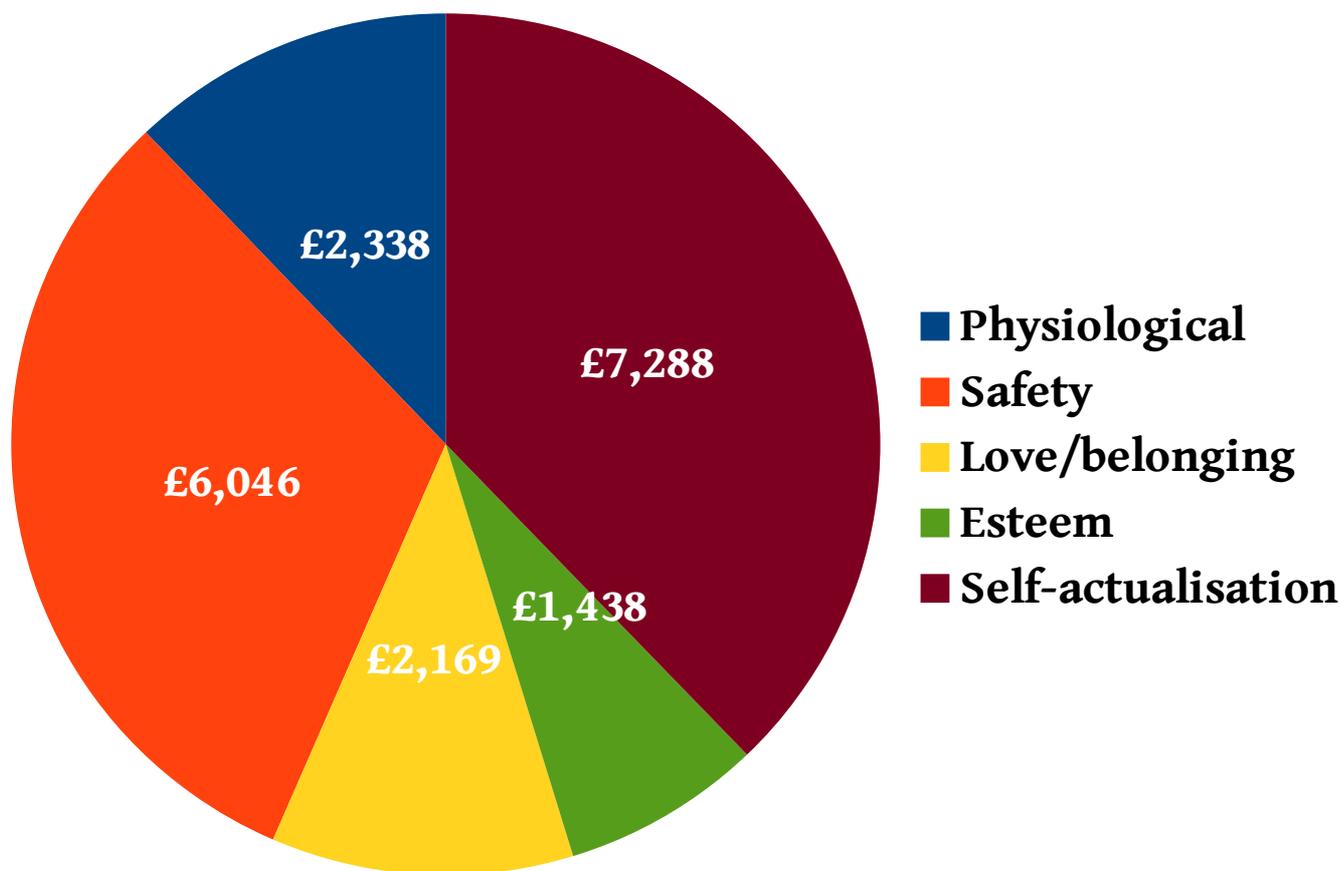
And How It Made Me Feel

The average feeling caused by a single transaction in the year 2014 was:

+1.05
(fair)

i have known for a long time the numbers would be something like this / in fact this is lower than i expected / implying that the final quarter was a little worse or a little more blandly unfeeling than the previous three / but it is fair to say i am manufacturing this figure for dramatic purposes / if i were to multiply this figure by the number of purchases it would seem like being a consumer improved my life a good bit / the process of taking an average of a large number of entries with a reasonably normal distribution will produce a figure that disguises all the outliers / and this is true but also artificial / i could spin an argument here / pointing out that the feeling of an individual purchase is thus trivial / unimportant greatly attenuated over time / but of course in the moment of purchase it can be the most important thing in the world / which is another thing i was trying to show / i believe in this number and don't believe too / it tells nothing and also everything you need to know about this work / its importance and unimportance

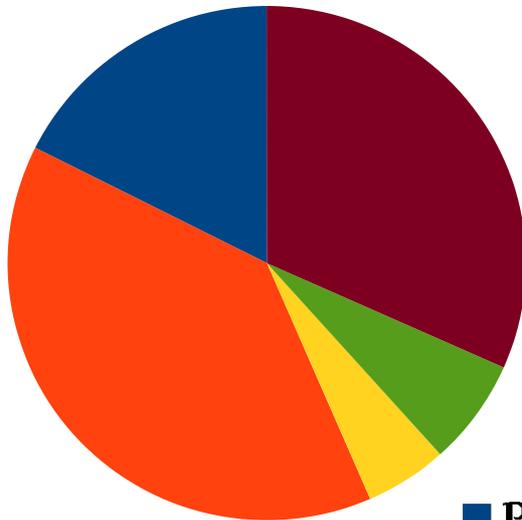
Spending By Need



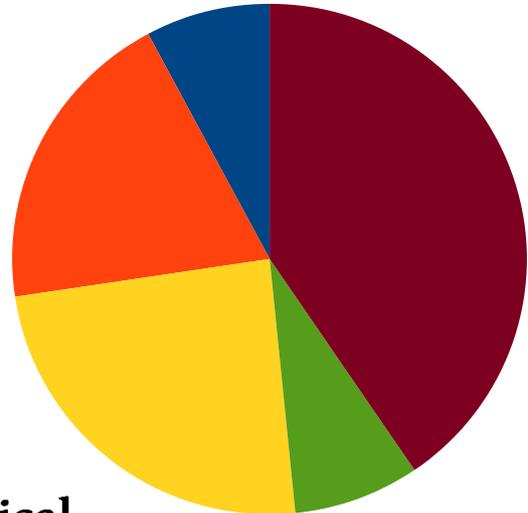
it is a relief to see / that in the end i spent more on my safety and survival than on my self-actualisation / because for an anticapitalist it seems absurd to be chasing so much self through spending / and yet that figure is also a product of my chronic shame / because even when buying toilet roll i apportion a percentage to self-actualisation / the part of me that spends a little more to get the toilet roll i think is / right / half of self-actualisation is my laughingly failed attempts to feel moral / the other half is my slightly more effective attempts to find pleasure / i am also pleased that i am not spending too much to try to get love / but disturbed that i was never able to rectify my low spending on esteem / i was chronically unable to attribute purchases to esteem / plugging it into self-actualisation instead / because i do not esteem myself / my attempts to find pleasure and rightness / were about feeling good / but rarely feeling good about myself

Feeling By Need

Negative Feelings



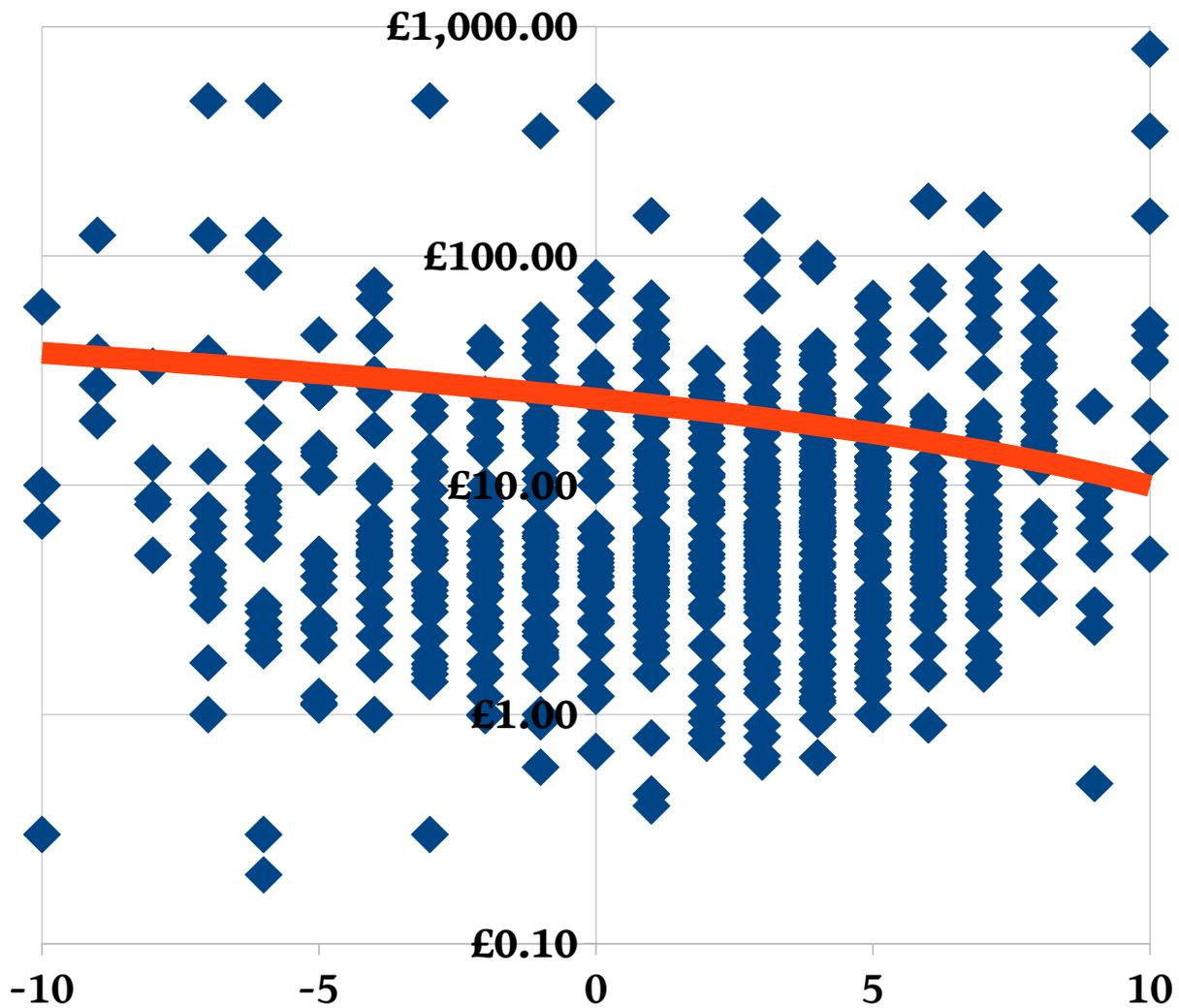
Positive Feelings



- **Physiological**
- **Safety**
- **Love/belonging**
- **Esteem**
- **Self-actualisation**

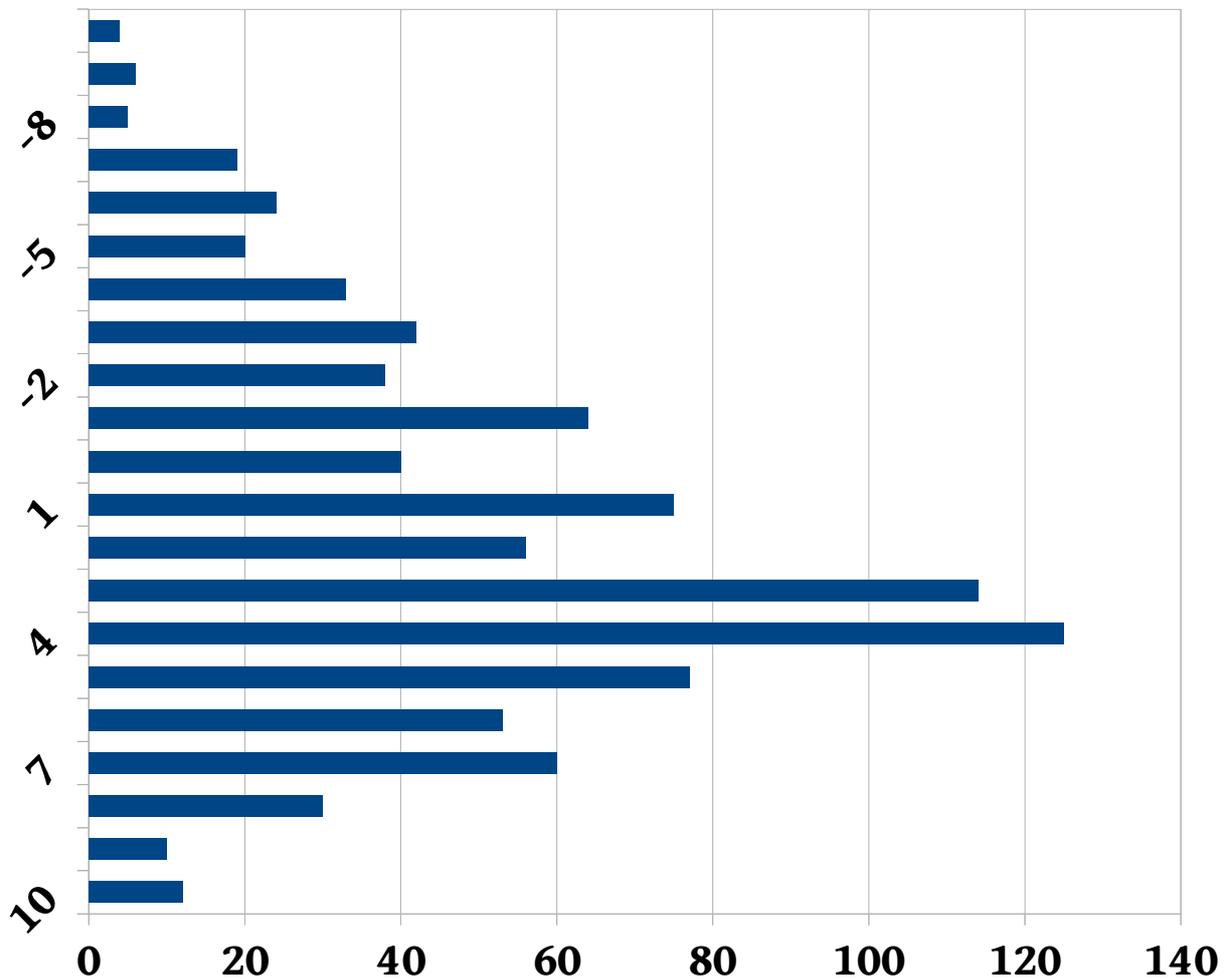
what can this tell me / that buying safety and survival was disproportionately likely to make me feel bad / and that trying to buy love and self-actualisation was disproportionately likely to make me feel good / but that everything is a risk / i believe the major contributors to negative feelings in safety and survival were rent and tax / in other words / the purchases i feel forced to make / about which i have no choice / or so little choice it barely seems to matter / each angry purchase there was a tiny instance of a greater social hurt / an injustice / a rage at a regressive economic system / that trying to buy pleasure worked more often than not is a surprise to me though / and almost a pleasing one / because rather than feeling conned by capitalism / being alive to the con makes such purchases feel bad / instead i feel i've won / found pleasure where it's so hard to find / but above all these too charts show that everything / everything is risky

Feeling By Cost



this ought to be the big one / the most important reveal / the bit i can point to and say / look / the more i spend on a purchase the less likely i am to feel good about it / and there it is / a linear line of best fit / showing a small but significant negative correlation / showing that expensive purchases were more likely to make me feel bad / and cheap purchases more likely to make me feel good / and yet i am suspicious / doubtful / i fear that the conclusion that a frugal life is a better life is dangerous / because it does not take into account what we are forced to pay for / and it does not show how important those occasional extravagances can be / my memory is that many of the expensive purchases skewing this data are mundane grocery shops that made me panic / and that if i could afford a few more well-chosen extravagances / everything might feel better / data can lie as much as memory

Feeling by Frequency



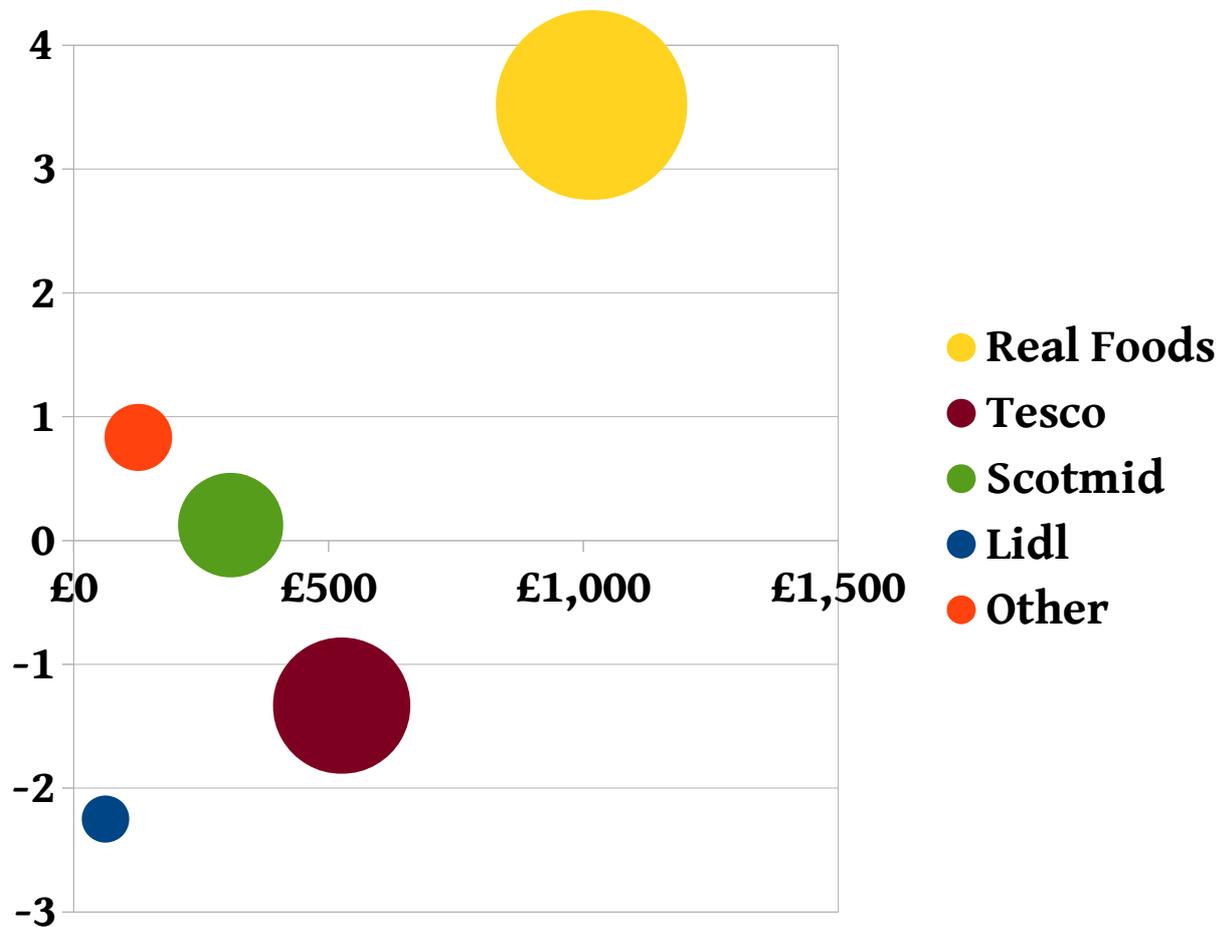
the skewed normal distribution is to be expected / it is interesting to note that the mean feeling was 1 / the median 3 / and the mode 4 / those two other averages suggesting that in general i was a happier consumer than you or i might believe / that alternating pattern is also no coincidence / i gave my feelings a scale of affects / -10 abysmal / -9 to -7 awful / -6 to -4 bad / -3 to -1 poor / 0 neutral / 1 to 3 fair / 4 to 6 good / 7 to 9 excellent / 10 euphoric / and what i believe that alternating pattern shows / is that i was much more likely to score something on the cusp of a category than in the centre / poor but almost bad / fair but almost good / i want things to be almost but not / to be double / and you could say this scoring preference skews the data / or if the numbers i've been applying have actually been changing how i feel about the world / which i think they have / you could say the numbers accurately reflect my constant ambivalence /

Categories By Cost By Feeling

Category	Spend	Av. Feel.	Poundfeels	Av. Feel. per £
Bills	£7,283.63	-1.69	-32335	0.00
Travel	£4,320.21	2.47	21133	0.57
Groceries	£2,039.35	1.22	3498	-0.05
Meals Out	£1,611.43	1.54	4328	0.22
Snacks	£122.88	0.97	192	0.47
Drink	£315.65	2.10	1061	0.63
Health	£616.29	3.12	2666	-2.47
Clothes	£145.63	2.00	577	0.11
Hardware	£522.64	-0.33	66	0.03
Art	£1,260.13	3.82	7592	1.09
Gifts	£241.92	5.29	1356	1.10
Charity	£25.00	2.75	70	0.48
Other Biz	£662.45	3.39	3943	0.01

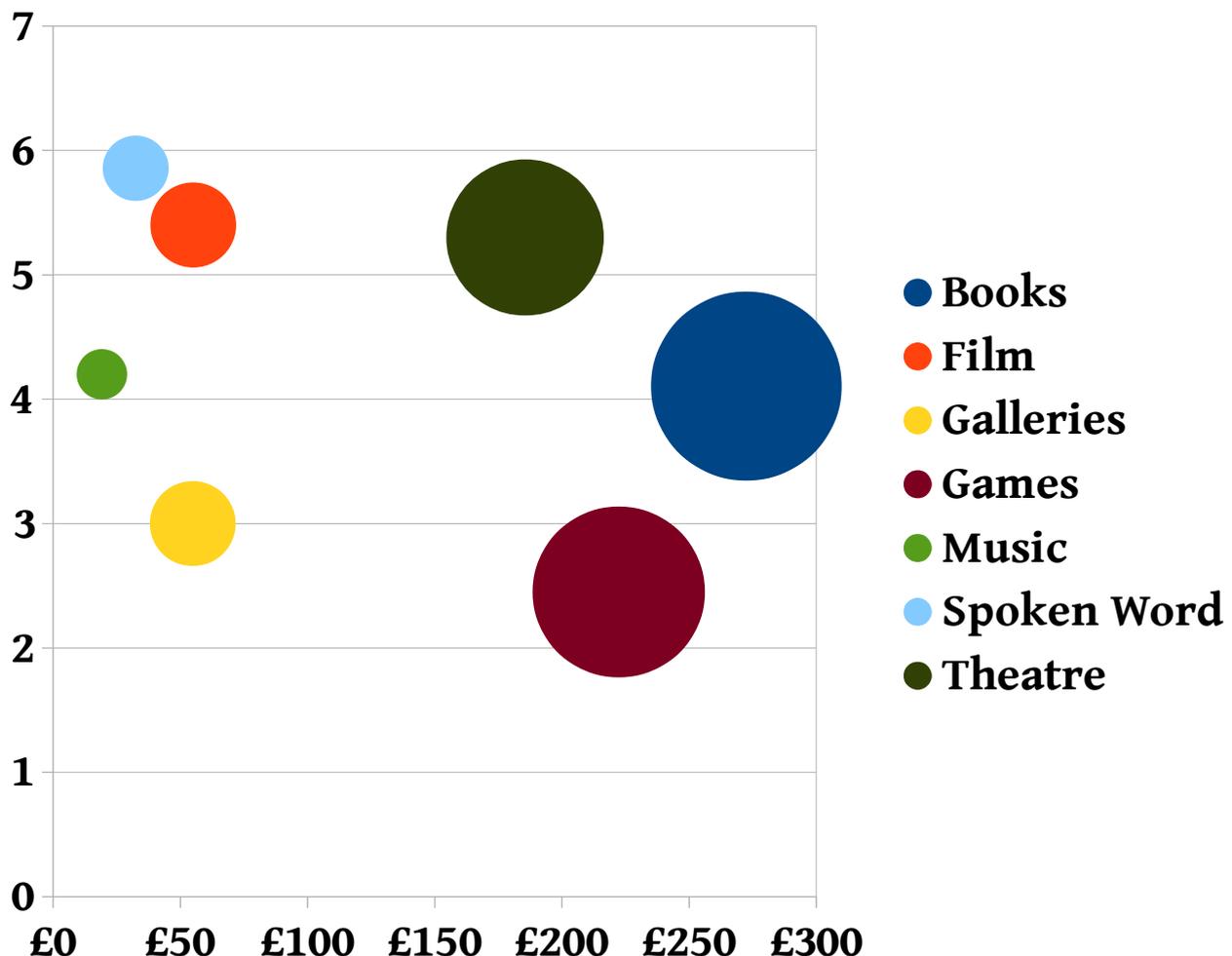
so many ways of looking at it all / the average feeling adds together all the feelings of that category's transactions and divides by the number of transactions / it tells how on average i felt about buying that thing / the poundfeels multiplies the cost of each purchase by its feeling and totals the result for each category / it gives you a made up figure for the total emotional cost or benefit from that category / the average feeling per pound divides each purchase's feeling by its cost and takes the average for the category / it tells what on average a pound of spend in that category will make me feel / average feeling and average feeling per pound tend to be inverse to each other / something that costs a lot and feels terrible will rank badly on the former and mediocly on the latter / something cheap that feels great ranks mediocly on the former and brilliantly on the latter / all these numbers in relation should tell us something / but really / it's a drawn out painful joke

Food By Cost By Feeling



the answer would appear to be obvious / just shop in the fancy organic grocery shop / more often than not you feel good there / and you can't feel good anywhere else / so even though you don't believe in the politics of it / just shop there / but what the numbers can't show you / at least not the brute and subjective way i'm treating them / what the numbers can't show you yet is how they are related to each other / maybe i can only consistently feel good in the fancy shop because sometimes i let myself go to the evil supermarket / because sometimes i buy what's cheapest and damn the morals / because i have agency and to show that agency sometimes i have to do the perverse thing / or maybe just because i live a low income precarious life / i can imagine better numbers showing that / numbers that track the proximity of variables to other variables / but all this numbering has generally not made me feel better / the easiest way to feel better is not to do it

Art By Cost By Feeling



and again its not so simple as at might appear / so the chart shows me that my regular buyers remorse over buying games on sale has made that bubble sink / and some of the things that make me feel best i don't spend much on / and that all art makes me feel good to buy / but that last conclusion is where the risk lies / because do i like going to films so much precisely because i don't go often so it's always a treat / and i know that going to spoken word feels good because it's being part of and supporting a community i love / but what would happen if it became a duty / and books are such a big part of my life that of course sometimes they're not going to feel as good / but do i really want to reduce how much of my life they make up / i was surprised by the numbers / but not by any of the conclusions / and i don't know that i will change anything / except sharpening my resolve not to binge buy games / but whether i change what i do is another question

Your Questions Answered

All questions asked by followers on social media. Further questions are welcome but may not be answered promptly. All the data and calculations have been published freely with this report and we would welcome any conclusions you can find.

How does spending correlate with positive feeling?

as shown above / the more i spent on a transaction / the less likely i was to feel good about it / however i've run some alternative numbers / and if i remove rent and taxes from the equation / then the opposite is true / with a slight positive correlation between cost and feeling / i believe this trend however is driven by a few outlier cases / some of my single biggest purchases were those i felt best of all about / a partly causal relation / big numbers provoked big feelings / if i chose them then i was very certain and thus very likely to feel very good / if i was forced i was very likely to feel very bad / if i run the numbers removing all transactions over £100 / there is an almost imperceptible positive correlation between cost and feeling / that is to say / if you remove all the unusual outlying cases / it really makes very little difference / but on the other hand / unusual outlying cases are a big part of life

How much do you spend on food compared to housing?

£3773.66 on all food / £6,005.03 on rent and council tax and electricity and heat / destroy this regressive housing system / burn it / burn it

How much do you spend on eating out compared to eating in?

£2,039.35 on eating in / £1,611.43 on eating out / eating out was very slightly likelier to make me feel better than eating in / neither were as likely to make me feel good as art / or gifts / or travel / or the combined feeling of caffeine and alcohol / but eating is hampered by being a necessity / while all the others get to be choices / so overall / even though i find eating well very hard / i think i'm doing ok

Your Questions Answered (Continued)

What was your biggest one-off spend?

no. 228 / £798 / a self-catering cottage paid for on expenses for a writing residency / the next biggest apart from rent and taxes was no. 133 / £350 / an outsize feelie sculpture of a vulva sprouting multi-textured phalluses / both of these purchases are among the very few purchases i rated a +10 / euphoric

What do you most regret spending money on?

there are many ways of answering this / the worst purchases by feeling were a paid public toilet (no. 88) ink cartridges (no. 300) and a penalty fare (no. 772) / but those all don't feel like choices i could regret / but purchases forced on me / the worst-feeling purchases i actually chose were / a takeaway curry that gave me food poisoning (no. 245) and my smartphone (various) / that's a good answer / because it combines a single disaster and an ongoing mistake that i still haven't shaken / but regret implies hindsight / memory / and what's sticking me most as regrettable consumer behaviour / is binge-buying games on sale / because it's spoiling something i otherwise love

Did it affect how you spent, keeping this log?

that was one of the biggest questions from day one / it surfaced over and over / and when i began the project i promised myself that it wouldn't / that observer and observed were tangled enough without attaching consumer intentionality to the project / but it is true that thinking about purchases before i made them and while i was thinking about making them / often made me not buy something i would otherwise have bought / and truth be told that was one of the original thoughts behind the project / to kill buyer's remorse / but it turned out that buyer's remorse was the least of my problems / and there were many other ways to feel awful / by the end of the project i was frequently reacting to my own restrictiveness / by saying fuck it and buying things anyway / the biggest effect of the project was not on my spending habits / but on my ways of feeling / which is much scarier

An Outcome

people ask me / did it make you spend less / did it change how you spend / sometimes people ask me / did it make you feel better about buying things / though those who've been reading it all year knew better than to ask that horror of a question / because the truth is it made me pay far too much attention to my feeling about purchases / more often trapped in the anxiety of it / there was an aspect of self abuse about it all / about the relentless attention / about the self-quantification / that same aspect of abuse behind most extreme art

and yet

it is six weeks into 2015 / i am feeling depressed / or worse / detached / i am feeling numb about the world more often / or not exactly numb / but finding it hard to access my feelings about the world / and talk about them / and so not feeling present / i realise that this is going on / and shortly after that comes a realisation that feels too absurd not to be true / that i spent a full year thinking really hard about my feelings in one specific area / and then writing about it / and performing that publicly / that i had a huge and lumbering and terrifying vehicle for expressing and exploring anxiety and neurosis / even though a very narrowly defined area / and a very disciplined practice of distorted mindfulness / and then suddenly / on january first / i cut it off / i just stopped / without giving my body warning / i thought i would be relieved / and at first i was / i could buy things without thinking about it too hard / i was freed / that feeling was not very strong / but occasionally it still crops up and i smile / but is it possible / that after pouring all my neurosis into this project / and then cutting it off / i made myself temporarily unable to feel / or access my feelings / that i blocked an outlet / stopped being mindful / that the year of artistic self-abuse was also a form of therapy / if a weird and strange and not necessarily safe form of therapy / as if any therapy is safe / and that i needed to find new ways to be with myself / healthier ways than spending all that time worrying about money for sure / but maybe spending all that time worrying about money / did teach me something about how to be with worry / and how to move beyond it / let's hope so

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). This means you are very welcome to adapt and share it freely as long as you credit me, but not on any revenue-generating websites unless you ask me first.

harry@harrygiles.org

<http://everythingibought.tumblr.com>