

Mathematics expert devises festive formula to find the perfect Christmas tree

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The Christmas Decision Tree by Dr Gordon Hunter, Kingston University London

Take one perplexed shopper, add a veritable forest of festive foliage, multiply by some mathematical ingenuity and what have you got? The perfect family Christmas tree.

A mathematics expert, from Kingston University London, has come to the rescue of householders up and down the land who find themselves stumped when it comes to the annual trek to buy the family Christmas tree.

Dr Gordon Hunter, who is based in the University's Faculty of Science, Engineering and Computing, has created a 'Christmas decision tree', based on the scientific method more commonly used to help solve business and personal problems.

Dr Hunter hopes his statistical sparkler will help people crack the conundrum of choosing their ideal Christmas tree, giving special consideration to key factors such as smell, colour, style and size.

He took up the challenge after he was asked if it would be possible to create a Christmas decision tree for leading garden centre chain Dobbies. The company, which has branches across the United Kingdom, was eager to help its customers figure out a solution to their 'tree-equations' and choose the variety of fir or spruce best suited to their individual tastes.



Dr Gordon Hunter, Kingston University London

"In life and business, people normally use decision trees to help them make correct or good choices when doing complicated tasks," Dr Hunter explained. "Situations where these may be found range from guides to filling-in official forms, such as tax returns, to aids for medical practitioners making diagnoses or prescribing suitable medication or treatment programmes.

"It was an interesting change to be given the opportunity to take a method I use in my research and give it a quirky, seasonal application, accessible to everyone. My Christmas decision tree will hopefully help people decide what type of tree is best for them and their home."

Dobbies Christmas tree expert Steve Guy said customers were definitely benefiting from Dr Hunter's advice. "Christmas is one of our favourite seasons of the year and we love helping people choose their trees," he added. "Now, with the aid of the Christmas decision tree, our customers will spend less time reviewing the many wonderful varieties available and have more time to think about how they make them sparkle."

Provided by Kingston University, London

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