**Project Name -** Admission Compass

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**Background -**

Starting the journey of higher education can be a daunting experience. From choosing a path that could define your future career, to figuring out suitable institutions to even begin applying to, it can feel overwhelming. Universities also set high admission standards, which can feel like the odds are stacked against you before you even start.

However, the landscape of college admissions is changing. More universities are broadening their admission criteria, aiming for a diverse and inclusive student body. Despite these positive changes, many students remain unaware of the multitude of paths available to them for gaining admission.

**Our Goals -**

At Admission Compass, our goal is to help potential students with the admissions process. Our mission is to empower students with clear, accessible information, ensuring that students have the knowledge they need about the different admissions requirements available to them.

**Our Objectives -**

1. Develop a user-friendly website that allows users to explore various degree programs along with their diverse admission criteria.
2. Implement a search tool that allows users to refine their searches based on degree fields, types, personal data, and additional filters.
3. Create an entry form for past and current students to share their college admission experiences by uploading their own admission data.
4. Compile this collected data into a database and utilize built-in tools to aggregate it into visually appealing displays on the website.

**Metrics -**

Here are some metrics that can provide valuable insights into the website’s performance, user engagement, and impact of Admission Compass:

1. Student Submissions: Tracking the number of submissions received from past and current students can provide a metric for user engagement and the value users perceive in contributing to the website.

2. Search Queries: Monitoring user search queries can reveal patterns in user behavior, such as popular search topics and peak search times. Analyzing these trends allows us to tailor our site and improve search functionality to better meet user needs.

3. Gathering User Feedback: Receiving feedback through surveys and reviews allows us to gather insights into user satisfaction, identify areas for improvement, and measure the overall success of the website.

By utilizing these metrics, we can gain a deeper understanding of how users interact with the site and its content. This enables us to make data-driven decisions to enhance the user experience, optimize search functionality, and continuously improve Admission Compass over time.

**Literature Review**

The word “habitus” refers to the shared values, attitudes, and behaviors of a particular group, which influences what individuals’ perspectives, goals, and expectations can be [3]. In Israel, for instance, these values tend to emphasize family and community bonds, a dedication to education and career growth, and a focus on mental and physical well-being. This outlook drives many adults in Israel to pursue higher education. The rationale behind this is the belief that higher education can open doors to better job opportunities, which can then provide individuals with more control over their lives and relationships.

Enrollment in higher education in Israel has steadily been increasing in recent years, due to both the cultural “habitus” or values and the increased efforts made by higher education institutions. Colleges and universities globally are intensifying their marketing efforts to attract more students, realizing that they need to increase their visibility so that potential students gain interest and apply[3]. In Israel specifically, advertisements promoting college admissions are popular across platforms like public transportation, billboards, social media, television, and more.

As a result of this, college applications have surged in the last few years, with students applying to a greater number of colleges and universities than ever before[3]. Many eager students now apply to multiple schools hoping that they will secure their spot in their top schools while also considering their back up options. However, this increase in application activity can be a pricey endeavor, as admission rates can be high. In Israel alone, each school admission typically costs around 500 shekels.

The pursuit of higher education has created a whole new industry. Prospective students and parents seek out guidance on school selection and the admissions process from private or in-house counselors, guidebooks, and other support services. These methods are in such high demand because individuals want to increase their chances of succeeding in their goals. This process can also be quite stressful for both the young and older adults alike[3]. Choosing a future is no small task and the high admission standards and hefty college fees only add to this pressure. These resources provide prospective students with valuable information and support in helping them identify the best-fit schools and navigate this journey with ease. Most importantly though, school counselors can provide insights into alternative pathways to college acceptance, enabling students to achieve their academic goals.

Traditionally, higher education institutions have relied on standardized tests for screening applicants for their schools. In Israel the standardized test is called the psychometric exam. The standardized test usually includes sections on verbal thinking, quantitative thinking, and English levels. However, recent evidence suggests that standardized test scores alone are not reliable in predicting future academic success[1]. Instead formulas combining standardized test scores with high school performances, course rigor, and personal character have been shown to predict better future successes.

In a research study, researchers investigated the prediction of standardized test scores and high school grade-point averages on college freshman grades, while also considering factors such as gender, ethnicity, and course difficulty. The study aimed to predict how well these admission factors predicted success in college grades. For their experiment they collected data from college freshmen and using statistical analysis techniques they examined the correlations between standardized test scores and first year college scores. They also analyzed student subgroups to explore how different demographics and socioeconomic groups could affect this analysis, as well as course toughness. The conclusions of this study found that colleges should be considering a variety of factors in college admittance and not just standardized test scores and high school grades. Such factors included difficulty of previous high school courses, intended college majors, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Researchers claim that by taking these factors into account it could help make the admissions process more fair, accurate, and ultimately bettering the institution’s scores overall[2].

In light of these studies, more institutions today are placing less weight on standardized test scores and more on high school performances, class rank, quality and difficulty of courses learned, rank of high school, and demographic factors too. Institutions have also found that “soft variables” like character, involvement, and intellectual curiosity are just as important as “hard variables” like grades and ranking. Instead of institutions striving to rate higher on various college ranking systems that are mainly based on their students' standardized test scores, institutions are seeing the value in more inclusive admission practices. More schools today are interested in creating an intellectual, creative, and well rounded atmosphere for their students, which builds larger campuses and a wider student demographic[1].

Despite these significant leaps forward in helping more students gain higher education, accessing this information about new admission requirements can still be challenging. Certain schools tend to only highlight their old admission requirements on their websites, which leaves prospective students uninformed about these alternative conditions. While seeking assistance from private or in-house counselors is one way to access this knowledge, it can be both time-consuming, costly, and fruitless, so many students might not even entertain these resources. Unfortunately, this can lead to prospective students who actually meet the new academic requirements to not even apply. Our goal is to make a one-stop information resource that is easy to access, stress-free, and free of charge. We want to clearly show all programs that each school offers and the various admission requirements accepted.

**Competitors**

The first competitor is "**לימודים בישראל**" (Studies in Israel). This website serves as a comprehensive resource hub for individuals interested in pursuing higher education in Israel. It offers a wealth of information covering various topics about studying in Israel, such as available bachelor's and master's programs, preparation tips for the psychometric exam, methods for calculating bagruyot scores (high school grades), and so much more.

Most importantly, the website features a calculator tool designed to estimate a user's admission likelihood into a specific degree program. This calculator considers the individual's psychometric score and average bagruyot score to generate its results. Users receive a list of potential schools along with the chance of acceptance to each one. The platform also provides insights into the average bagruyot score and psychometric score that past users have submitted in attempts for a successful admission. The methodology behind the calculator and data is also explained:

We compiled and stored data regarding admission criteria for a diverse array of undergraduate and graduate programs. This database encompasses approximately 70 distinct academic institutions. The computation process factored in psychometric scores, bagruyot averages, and these combined scores that were accepted into the most recent enrollment cycle. In instances where admission data was unavailable, minimum criteria was incorporated.

This prediction tool is a significant asset for the website that can help many potential students. It offers results clearly and concisely, and serves as an inspiration for interested students. It also provides information on whether an institution offers free support, which can be useful for prospective students who may want to learn more. Lastly, the website includes the percentage of users who found this information useful, which adds further merit to the tool.

There are some limitations to this tool though, for example it solely relies on these fields: degree type, interested field, psychometric score, and average bagruyot score. This narrow data choice can overlook other important factors that could have influenced past admissions acceptances and future ones as well. Due to this, the results do not indicate which important data points actually have contributed to the acceptance of previous students.

Additionally, the website's layout and content is abundant and confusing, which can make it challenging for users to navigate through efficiently. For example, the link to the calculator was found after scrolling to the bottom of the homepage. Despite these drawbacks, the website exudes professionalism and offers a wealth of information, which earns itself trust amongst prospective students.

The second competitor, "**College Scoreboard**," is a straightforward website that enables users to search for relevant institutions by school names, fields of study, degree type, and various other filters. Upon entering the search criteria, the website presents a list of matching institutions along with detailed information about their programs. This includes graduation rates, average school costs, campus diversity, test scores, acceptance rates, and more. Additionally, the website offers a useful tool that allows users to compare comprehensive data between schools and/or fields of study. This visual comparison aids students in easily assessing the detailed information of different schools.

The website is exceptionally clear and concise, focusing solely on essential data without overwhelming its users with unnecessary information. This streamlined approach gives information over quickly to its users. Additionally, the search bar only accepts valid inputs, this further streamlines the querying process and enhances speed and efficiency. Users can benefit from a wide range of filters that enables them to refine their searches. The visualization of data is also a notable strength, offering visually appealing representations that allow users to gather information quickly, whether they are viewing details about a single institution or utilizing the comparison tool to assess multiple institutions at once.

The website does have its limitations though. For example, It does not allow prospective students to upload more of their personal data and conduct searches based on that information. It lacks filters based on high school performance and other academic achievements. As a result of this, the search tool is less of a predictive model and more of a general guide. There are many other competitor websites like this for institutions in the United States, including The Princeton Review and Niche.

The third competitor is “**CollegeData.Com**”. This platform provides users with comprehensive details about various colleges across the United States. It also assists prospective and current students in locating scholarships and other financial resources, but most importantly it offers a very detailed college admissions calculator.

This college acceptance calculator provides a strong estimate for prospective students' likelihood of admission to any of the 2000+ U.S. colleges listed on their website. It compares user data with the qualifications of recently enrolled freshmen at these colleges. This tool also incorporates various and alternative admission factors considered by colleges.

This tool collects traditional admission requirements as well as alternative requirements, such as high school performance, class rank, achievements, leadership roles, honors coursework, and many more. The tool also considers the level of competition for each college and attributes different weights to different qualifications depending on the specific college’s metrics. The calculations indicate whether an applicant is a strong, a possibility, or a stretch for a candidate, while also exposing the importance of each factor in the college's admission process. This can help applicants understand which areas they can improve upon when applying.

Among our competitors, this website's tool stands out as the most robust. It allows applicants to include alternative prerequisites for college admissions, see comparisons between their results and those of presently enrolled students, and informs prospective students about their likelihood of acceptance or areas where improvement may be needed.

The weaknesses of this website stem from the usability. Users might find themselves overwhelmed by the amount of information presented on this website, and more importantly, the results generated by the calculator can appear cramped, unclear, and inadequately visualized for effective comparison with other programs. The predefined input fields also limit users from inputting potentially important data. Considering the multitude of factors that may contribute to a student's admission, it is important to provide a platform that accommodates for any relevant information. Furthermore, potential students need to create an account before even gaining access to the calculator tool.

Our final competitors are the websites of individual universities and colleges themselves. These sites typically offer admission calculators, which vary widely in their level of detail and flexibility. For instance, the calculator provided by the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology is comprehensive, and it allows users to input multiple data points to cover various admission requirements. On the contrary, tools like the one offered by Bar Ilan University are more simplistic, relying on basic criteria and lacking options for alternative fields. This can create a challenge for prospective students seeking to gather relevant information directly from institution websites themselves. Additionally, potential students must navigate through multiple university websites and complete their credentials repeatedly to gain insight into the admission requirements for each institution. We attempted to search more Israeli websites like “Toaar” and “Yoram”, but unfortunately both calculator tools were inaccessible or non-functional.

These are several resources available to assist students with college admission requirements. As seen, some of these websites focus solely in this area, offering advanced calculators to gauge students’ chances of acceptance, while others provide extensive information to support students throughout the higher education journey. By analyzing our competitors in this field it has given us insights into how we intend to structure and share our data.

Admission Compass will primarily focus on providing information about admission prerequisites for a range of institutions. While the website will encompass various Israeli colleges and universities with concise overviews of each one, its primary focus will be on sharing specific admission criteria met by successful applicants of each institution, rather than delving into the broader aspects of a student's higher education journey.

Our data will be collected from past and current students who will input their criteria through our website. Here, they can share their data in both predefined input fields and open text input fields, allowing students to include any additional requirements that contributed to their college acceptance. This data will then be organized in a database and processed using proprietary functions to present it in a clear, summarized, and visually appealing way. We'll also display each student's submission anonymously, allowing interested applicants to explore further the specific requirements and scores that led to each student's acceptance.

Users of our website will have the option to search for acceptance requirements based on degree name and type, each input will consist of a dropdown list ensuring valid searches only. Users can also search based on their personal data and field of interest, utilizing a combination of predefined input fields and open text fields. The search results will display the institutions and their programs that best match the user's criteria. Furthermore, users will have the ability to further refine their search results through additional filtering options.

Our goal is to make this information readily accessible to all users without requiring a login or unnecessary personal details. Clarity and user-friendliness are paramount in presenting the data, allowing for quick impressions, comparisons, and deeper insights. Our goal is to provide helpful results that eases students’ tensions and provides for smoother admissions experiences.

**References**

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