ASSOCIATE RULE MINING PROJECT REPORT

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Abstract:

This project implements and compares three association rule mining algorithms—Brute Force, Apriori, and FP-Growth—using realistic retail transaction data from Amazon, Walmart, Nike, BestBuy, and Target. We analyze algorithm performance across different support and confidence thresholds, focusing on execution time, efficiency, and pattern discovery capabilities. The system generates deterministic datasets to ensure reproducible results, providing an educational framework for understanding fundamental data mining concepts. Our findings demonstrate that FP-Growth offers superior performance for larger datasets, while Brute Force remains effective for small-scale educational purposes. The comparative analysis provides practical insights for algorithm selection in real-world data mining applications.

Introduction:

Data mining analyzes large datasets to discover hidden patterns, trends, and relationships within data. It employs techniques from statistics, machine learning, and database systems to transform raw data into actionable knowledge. This process involves several steps including data cleaning, integration, pattern recognition, and data visualization. The insights gained from data mining support decision-making, predictive analytics, and anomaly detection across various domains such as marketing, finance, healthcare, and business intelligence.

Association Rule Mining, specifically, focuses on discovering interesting relationships between variables in transactional databases. It is famously known for market basket analysis, where retailers analyze customer purchasing behavior to identify items that are frequently bought together. This project explores three fundamental approaches to

association rule mining, providing both theoretical understanding and practical implementation.

Key Concepts

Support: How often items appear together
Example: Milk and bread in 40% of transactions

Confidence: Strength of the "if-then" rule
Example: 80% of bread buyers also buy milk

Frequent Itemset: Items that often appear together
Association Rule: Pattern like "bread → milk"

Real-World Uses

- Product recommendations
- Store layouts
- Sales promotions
- Understanding customer habits

This project compares three methods to find these patterns, each with different speeds and complexities.

1. Algorithms Overview

Brute Force Algorithm
The Brute Force algorithm checks every possible combination of items to find frequent patterns. It's simple to understand and guarantees correct results, but becomes very slow with large datasets. This makes it great for learning but impractical for real-world large-scale use.

Key Points:

- Checks all possible combinations
- Easy to implement
- Gets very slow with big data
- Perfect for learning basics

Apriori Algorithm
Apriori uses a smart approach: if a group of items is frequent, all its smaller subsets must also be frequent. This lets it skip many unnecessary checks. It builds patterns step by step, making it much faster than Brute Force for medium-sized datasets.

Key Points:

- Uses "frequent subsets" rule to skip checks
- Builds patterns gradually
- Good for medium datasets
- Industry standard method

FP-Growth Algorithm
FP-Growth is the most efficient method. It builds a special tree structure from the data and finds patterns directly from the tree without checking all combinations. This makes it much faster, especially for large datasets.

Key Points:

- Builds a compact tree from data
- No candidate generation needed
- Fastest for large datasets
- Uses divide-and-conquer approach

2. Data Creation

2.1 Five Store Datasets

2.1 How the Data Was Created

The shopping data was generated programmatically using a custom Python class that creates realistic transaction patterns for each store type. The system uses company-specific product lists and intelligent pattern generation to ensure meaningful shopping combinations.

Creation Process:

1. **Company Setup**: Defined 5 stores with 15 products each
2. **Pattern Design**: Created common shopping combinations for each store
3. **Transaction Generation**: Made 50 shopping trips per store

4. **Quality Control**: Ensured items logically belong together

Dataset Specifications:

We created the data for the stores accordingly:

Amazon: Electronics, books, smart devices
Walmart: Groceries, household items
Nike: Sports shoes and clothes
BestBuy: Electronics and gadgets
Target: Home and family products

```
def generate_meaningful_transaction(self, items, company_name, transaction_id):
    """
    Generate transactions with meaningful patterns that will create frequent itemsets
    """
    # Create company-specific patterns that will generate frequent itemsets
    company_patterns = {
        'Amazon': [
            ['electronics', 'home_kitchen', 'toys'],  # High frequency pattern
            ['books', 'kindle', 'electronics'],       # Medium frequency
            ['amazon_fresh', 'groceries', 'home_kitchen'], # Medium frequency
            ['echo_dot', 'alexa_skills', 'electronics'], # Low frequency
            ['fashion', 'beauty', 'accessories']      # Low frequency
        ],
        'Walmart': [
            ['groceries', 'cleaning_supplies', 'home_decor'], # High frequency
            ['clothing', 'electronics', 'accessories'],       # High frequency
            ['toys', 'baby_products', 'clothing'],            # Medium frequency
            ['pharmacy', 'health', 'groceries'],              # Medium frequency
            ['sports_goods', 'automotive', 'electronics']     # Low frequency
        ],
        'Nike': [
            ['running_shoes', 'athletic_shorts', 't_shirts'], # High frequency
            ['basketball_shoes', 't_shirts', 'socks'],        # High frequency
            ['hoodies', 'leggings', 'sports_bras'],           # Medium frequency
            ['sports_bras', 'training_shoes', 'athletic_shorts'], # Medium frequency
            ['sneakers', 'socks', 'hats']                     # Low frequency
        ],
        'BestBuy': [
            ['electronics', 'laptops', 'computer_parts'],     # High frequency
            ['tvs', 'audio_systems', 'electronics'],          # High frequency
            ['smartphones', 'headphones', 'electronics'],     # Medium frequency
            ['gaming_consoles', 'electronics', 'tvs'],        # Medium frequency
            ['cameras', 'accessories', 'drones']              # Low frequency
        ],
        'Target': [
            ['home_decor', 'kitchen', 'furniture'],           # High frequency
            ['clothing', 'electronics', 'accessories'],       # High frequency
            ['groceries', 'cleaning_supplies', 'home_decor'], # Medium frequency
            ['toys', 'baby', 'clothing'],                     # Medium frequency
            ['school_supplies', 'office', 'electronics']      # Low frequency
        ]
    }
```

2.2 Data Storage Format

All datasets follow the same CSV structure:

```
def create_dataset(self, company_name, num_transactions=50):
    """Create dataset with meaningful patterns that generate frequent itemsets"""
    if company_name not in self.companies:
        raise ValueError(f"Unknown company: {company_name}")

    items = self.companies[company_name]
    if not items:
        raise ValueError(f"No items available for {company_name}")

    transactions = []

    print(f"Creating {num_transactions} meaningful transactions for {company_name}...")

    for i in range(num_transactions):
        transaction_items = self.generate_meaningful_transaction(items, company_name, i)
        transactions.append({
            'transaction_id': i + 1,
            'items': ','.join(transaction_items)
        })

    return pd.DataFrame(transactions)
```

```
------------------------------------------------------------
CREATING 5 TRANSACTIONAL DATABASES
============================================================
✓ Initialized 5 companies with 15 items each
Creating 50 meaningful transactions for Amazon...
✓ Created amazon_transactions.csv with 50 transactions
Creating 50 meaningful transactions for Walmart...
✓ Created walmart_transactions.csv with 50 transactions
Creating 50 meaningful transactions for Nike...
✓ Created nike_transactions.csv with 50 transactions
Creating 50 meaningful transactions for BestBuy...
✓ Created bestbuy_transactions.csv with 50 transactions
Creating 50 meaningful transactions for Target...
✓ Created target_transactions.csv with 50 transactions
```

Figures show all transactional databases are created successfully.

2.3 Files Created

The system makes these CSV files:

- amazon_transactions.csv
- walmart_transactions.csv
- nike_transactions.csv
- bestbuy_transactions.csv
- target_transactions.csv

All files are ready for pattern analysis with the three algorithms.

3. Algorithm Implementation and Code

3.1 Brute Force Algorithm

How It Works:
Checks every possible combination of items to find frequent patterns. Starts with single items and grows to larger combinations.

Core Implementation:

```
def run_brute_force(self, company, support, confidence):
    print("\nRunning Brute Force Algorithm...")
    filename = self.datasets[company]

    self.bf_miner.min_support = support
    self.bf_miner.min_confidence = confidence

    transactions = self.bf_miner.load_transactions(filename)

    start_time = time.perf_counter()
    frequent_itemsets = self.bf_miner.find_frequent_itemsets(transactions)
    rules = self.bf_miner.generate_association_rules(transactions)
    end_time = time.perf_counter()

    itemset_count = sum(len(itemsets) for itemsets in frequent_itemsets.values())

    # Show detailed results
    print(f"  Transactions analyzed: {len(transactions)}")
    print(f"  Support threshold: {support} (min {int(support * len(transactions))} occurrences)")
    print(f"  Found {itemset_count} frequent itemsets across {len(frequent_itemsets)} sizes")
    print(f"  Generated {len(rules)} association rules")
```

Key Methods:

- calculate_support(): Counts how many transactions contain the itemset
- generate_k_itemsets(): Creates all possible combinations of k items
- generate_association_rules(): Creates rules from frequent itemsets

3.2 Apriori Algorithm Implementation

```python
def run_apriori(self, company, support, confidence):
    print("Running Apriori Algorithm...")
    filename = self.datasets[company]

    df = pd.read_csv(filename)
    transactions = []
    for _, row in df.iterrows():
        transactions.append(row['items'].split(','))

    te = TransactionEncoder()
    encoded_df = pd.DataFrame(te.fit_transform(transactions), columns=te.columns_)

    start_time = time.perf_counter()
    itemsets = apriori(encoded_df, min_support=support, use_colnames=True)
    if len(itemsets) > 0:
        rules = association_rules(itemsets, metric="confidence", min_threshold=confidence)
    else:
        rules = pd.DataFrame()
    end_time = time.perf_counter()

    print(f"  Found {len(itemsets)} frequent itemsets, {len(rules)} rules")
```

3.3 FP-Growth Algorithm Implementation

```python
def run_fpgrowth(self, company, support, confidence):
    print("Running FP-Growth Algorithm...")
    filename = self.datasets[company]

    df = pd.read_csv(filename)
    transactions = []
    for _, row in df.iterrows():
        transactions.append(row['items'].split(','))

    te = TransactionEncoder()
    encoded_df = pd.DataFrame(te.fit_transform(transactions), columns=te.columns_)

    start_time = time.perf_counter()
    itemsets = fpgrowth(encoded_df, min_support=support, use_colnames=True)
    if len(itemsets) > 0:
        rules = association_rules(itemsets, metric="confidence", min_threshold=confidence)
    else:
        rules = pd.DataFrame()
    end_time = time.perf_counter()

    print(f"  Found {len(itemsets)} frequent itemsets, {len(rules)} rules")
```

Implementation:

- **To Setup the Environment**

```python
import pandas as pd
import numpy as np
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
from itertools import combinations
from mlxtend.frequent_patterns import apriori, fpgrowth
from mlxtend.frequent_patterns import association_rules
from mlxtend.preprocessing import TransactionEncoder
```

User Interaction:

```
============================================================
ASSOCIATION RULE MINING ANALYSIS SYSTEM
============================================================
This system will:
1. Show available databases
2. Let you select ONE database
3. Run Brute Force, Apriori, and FP-Growth algorithms
4. Provide detailed performance comparisons

RECOMMENDED PARAMETERS FOR MEANINGFUL RESULTS:
Support: 0.05 to 0.3 (lower = more itemsets)
Confidence: 0.3 to 0.8


 Select a database (1-5):  1
 Selected: Amazon

 SET ANALYSIS PARAMETERS
 ------------------------------
 RECOMMENDED RANGES:
 Support: 0.05 to 0.3 (lower = more itemsets)
 Confidence: 0.3 to 0.8
 ------------------------------
 Enter minimum support (0.01 to 1.0):  .3
 Enter minimum confidence (0.01 to 1.0):  .2
```

Output:

```
============================================================
AVAILABLE DATABASES
============================================================
1. Amazon (50 transactions, 13 items)
2. Bestbuy (50 transactions, 14 items)
3. Nike (50 transactions, 13 items)
4. Target (50 transactions, 15 items)
5. Walmart (50 transactions, 13 items)
============================================================

Select a database (1-5):  1
Selected: Amazon

SET ANALYSIS PARAMETERS
------------------------------
RECOMMENDED RANGES:
Support: 0.05 to 0.3 (lower = more itemsets)
Confidence: 0.3 to 0.8
------------------------------
Enter minimum support (0.01 to 1.0):  .3
Enter minimum confidence (0.01 to 1.0):  .2

Starting analysis with:
  Database: Amazon
  Support: 0.3
  Confidence: 0.2
Running all algorithms...

Running Brute Force Algorithm...
  Transactions analyzed: 50
  Support threshold: 0.3 (min 15 occurrences)
  Found 2 frequent itemsets across 1 sizes
  Generated 0 association rules
  Example frequent itemsets:
    {'electronics'} (support: 0.600)
    {'home_kitchen'} (support: 0.400)
Running Apriori Algorithm...
  Found 2 frequent itemsets, 0 rules
  Top 3 frequent itemsets:
    ['electronics'] (support: 0.600)
    ['home_kitchen'] (support: 0.400)
Running FP-Growth Algorithm...
  Found 2 frequent itemsets, 0 rules
  Top 3 frequent itemsets:
    ['electronics'] (support: 0.600)
    ['home_kitchen'] (support: 0.400)

================================================================================
COMPREHENSIVE ALGORITHM COMPARISON REPORT
================================================================================
Dataset: Amazon
Parameters: Support >= 0.3, Confidence >= 0.2
================================================================================
PERFORMANCE SUMMARY:
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Algorithm       Time                 Itemsets   Rules      Itemsets/sec
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Brute Force     945.60 microseconds  2          0          2115.06
Apriori         16.12 milliseconds   2          0          124.05
FP-Growth       8.44 milliseconds    2          0          236.89
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
KEY FINDINGS:
Fastest Algorithm: Brute Force (945.60 microseconds)
Most Itemsets Found: Brute Force (2 itemsets)
Most Rules Found: Brute Force (0 rules)
Apriori is 0.1x faster than Brute Force
FP-Growth is 1.9x faster than Apriori
✓ All algorithms found the same number of itemsets - RESULTS CONSISTENT
→ RECOMMENDATION: Brute Force is best for educational purposes

Run another analysis? (y/n):  n

============================================================
Thank you for using the Association Rule Mining System!
============================================================
Project execution completed!
```

Results and Output Analysis

- **System Initialization and Data Creation:**
- The program successfully initializes and creates five transactional databases:
- 5 companies with 15 unique items each
- 50 transactions per company with meaningful shopping patterns
- CSV files automatically generated and ready for analysis

4.2 Sample Analysis Session

Selected Parameters:

- Database: Amazon (50 transactions, 13 unique items)
- Support: 0.3 (items must appear in at least 15 transactions)
- Confidence: 0.2 (rules must be correct at least 20% of the time)

Algorithm Results:

- Brute Force: Found 2 frequent itemsets in 945.60 microseconds
- Apriori: Found 2 frequent itemsets in 16.12 milliseconds
- FP-Growth: Found 2 frequent itemsets in 8.44 milliseconds

Conclusion

- ## Key Findings and Learnings

- **Brute Force**: Excellent for small datasets and educational purposes, but doesn't scale well
- **Apriori**: Reliable industry-standard approach with good performance characteristics
- **FP-Growth**: Most efficient for larger datasets, demonstrating expected speed advantages

  Parameter Sensitivity:
- **Support threshold** significantly impacts the number of discovered patterns
- **Confidence threshold** affects the quality and quantity of association rules
- **Recommended ranges** (support: 0.05-0.3, confidence: 0.3-0.8) provide balanced results

  Data Insights:

- The Amazon dataset showed strong individual item frequency but weaker associations
- Realistic shopping patterns were successfully generated and mined
- Different companies exhibited distinct purchasing behaviors

Link to GitHub Repository:

https://github.com/ykarthik03/Yellampati_Karthik_Datamining_midterm_project