

ANG: a combination of Apriori and graph computing techniques for frequent itemsets mining

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Published online: 18 April 2017
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Abstract The Apriori algorithm is one of the most well-known and widely accepted methods for the association rule mining. In Apriori, it uses a prefix tree to represent k -itemsets, generates k -itemset candidates based on the frequent $(k - 1)$ -itemsets, and determines the frequent k -itemsets by traversing the prefix tree iteratively based on the transaction records. When k is small, the execution of Apriori is very efficient. However, the execution of Apriori could be very slow when k becomes large because of the deeper recursion depth to determine the frequent k -itemsets. From the perspective of graph computing, the transaction records can be converted to a graph $G(V, E)$, where V is the set of vertices of G that represents the transaction records and E is the set of edges of G that represents the relations among transaction records. Each k -itemset in the transaction records will have a corresponding connected component in G . The number of vertices in the corresponding connected component is the support of the k -

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itemset. Since the time to find the corresponding connected component of a k -itemset in G is constant for any k , the graph computing method will be very efficient if the number of k -itemsets is relatively small. Based on Apriori and graph computing techniques, a hybrid method, called Apriori and Graph Computing (ANG), is proposed to compute the frequent itemsets. Initially, ANG uses Apriori to compute the frequent k -itemsets and then switches to the graph computing method when k becomes large (where the number of k -itemset candidates is relatively small). The experimental results show that ANG outperforms both Apriori and the graph computing method for all test cases.

Keywords Apriori · Graph computing · Frequent itemset mining · Data mining

1 Introduction

Data mining is to extract the previously unknown and potentially useful information from a large database [15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 32]. It is the core process of the knowledge discovery of database [24]. The association rule mining is one of the most important techniques in data mining. The association rule was first proposed in supermarket sales [1]. A supermarket collects a lot of transaction records. The owner wants to find useful information from transaction records to help decision makers draw up sale plans. Information such as certain groups of items that are consistently purchased together is interesting. The managers could use the information to adjust store layouts, arrange cross selling, and so on.

A transaction record contains a set of items, where an item means a product. Let I be the set of all items. An association rule may like $X \rightarrow Y$, where $X, Y \subset I$ and $X \cap Y = \emptyset$. For example, users who buy milk and bread may also buy butter. We say $X = \{milk, bread\} \rightarrow Y = \{butter\}$ is an association rule if the confidence of X and Y , denoted as

$$\text{confidence}(X, Y) = \text{support}(X) / \text{support}(X \cup Y), \quad (1)$$

is greater than the minimum confidence, where $\text{support}(X)$ is the number of transaction records that contains X and the minimum confidence is a user-defined threshold. Given a set of transaction records, there may exist a large number of useless association rules in which the supports of X and Y are small although their confidences are large. To eliminate those useless association rules, the association rule mining, in general, is divided into 2 steps. The first step is to find all frequent itemsets whose supports are greater than the minimum support. This step is also known as frequent itemset mining (FIM). The second step is to produce all association rules based on Equation (1) for all frequent itemsets found in the first step. The overall performance of association rule mining is mainly depending on the first step since the second step is easy.

The Apriori algorithm is one of the most well-known and widely accepted methods to compute FIM [15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 32]. It uses a prefix tree to represent frequent itemsets [3, 4]. In the prefix tree, each node in the k th level represents a set of k -itemsets. To avoid useless association rules research, Apriori first generates k -itemset candidates based on the frequent $(k - 1)$ -itemsets. Then, it traverses the prefix tree

iteratively based on the transaction records to determine whether a k -itemset candidate is frequent. When k is small, the execution of Apriori is very efficient. However, the execution of Apriori could be very slow when k becomes large due to the deeper recursion depth to determine the frequent k -itemsets.

The graph computing is a technique to process a set of large-scale data that can be represented as a graph. Many applications, such as breadth-first search, page rank, connected components, and shortest paths, can be implemented by using the graph computing method. From the perspective of graph computing, a set of transaction records can be treated as a graph $G = (V, E)$, where V is the set of vertices of G that represents the transaction records and E is the set of edges of G that represents the relations among transaction records. Two vertices have an edge associated with them if the corresponding transaction records satisfied the condition specified by the relation. For the association rule mining, the relation can be specified as two transaction records have the k items in common, where $k = 1, \dots, |I|$ and I is the set of all items in transaction records. An example of such perspective is shown in Fig. 1. In Fig. 1a, a set of transaction records is given. Figure 1b shows the corresponding graph G_1 in which two transaction records have 1 item in common. Figure 1c shows the corresponding graph G_2 in which two transaction records have 2 items in common.

Let D be a set of transaction records and G_k be the corresponding graph of D with value k . From G_k , we can obtain a set of connected components C_k in which any two transactions in a connected component have the same k items in common, that is, each k -itemset in D has a corresponding connected component in C_k . The support of a k -itemset happens to be the number of vertices in the corresponding connected component. Therefore, to use the graph computing method to determine the frequent k -itemsets of D , we only need to compute the number of vertices in each connected components of C_k . If the support is greater than a threshold (minimum support), then this k -itemset is frequent. The performance of using the graph computing method for FIM is determined by the number of connected components in C_k . Given the graph G_2 shown in Fig. 1c, the set of connected components of G_2 is shown in Fig. 2.

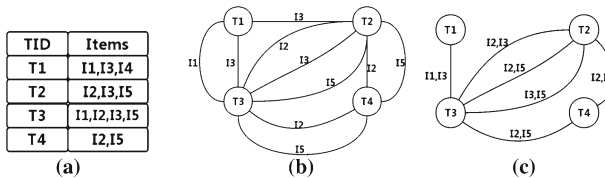
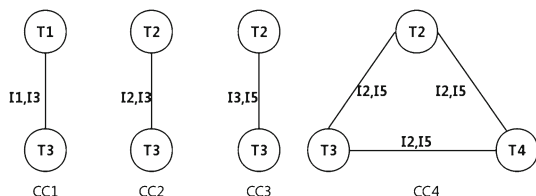


Fig. 1 A graph perspective of transaction records. a Transaction records, b Graph G_1 , c Graph G_2

Fig. 2 The set of connected components of G_2 in Fig. 1c



In Apriori, when k is small, the number of k -itemset candidates could be very huge. If the graph computing method is applied to determine the frequent k -itemsets based on these k -itemset candidates, its execution will be very slow. On the opposite, when k is large, the number of k -itemset candidates will be small. The calculation of frequent k -itemsets will be very efficient if the graph computing method is applied. Since Apriori is efficient when k is small while the graph computing method is efficient when k is large, in this paper, we propose a hybrid method, called ANG (Apriori and graph computing), by combining the advantages of these two methods for FIM. Initially, ANG uses Apriori to perform FIM and then switches to the graph computation method when k becomes large. We have derived a formula to determine the switch from Apriori to the graph computing method (this is described in Sect. 3.3 in detail).

To evaluate ANG, we compared its performance with that of Apriori, DHP (directed hashing and pruning) [23], and the graph computing method. The experimental results show that ANG outperforms Apriori, DHP, and the graph computing method for all test cases. The contributions of this paper are as follows:

1. We have formulated the FIM problem as a graph computing problem.
2. We have proposed a hybrid method, ANG, based on Apriori and the graph computing method to compute FIM efficiently.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces some graph computing structures and some FIM methods. Section 3 introduces ANG in details. The experimental results are given in Sect. 4.

2 Related work

Many graph computing techniques have been proposed in the literature [5–10, 14, 16, 18–20, 25–30, 33–35]. They can be divided into two categories, single-node graph computing techniques [10, 14, 16, 18, 25–27, 30, 33, 34] and distributed graph computing techniques [5, 7–9, 19, 20, 31, 35].

In GraphChi [14], the authors proposed a graph computing structure in a single-node system. It is a disk-based system to compute graphs with billions of edges from disk by using a novel parallel sliding windows method. GridGraph [34] decomposes graphs into vertex chunks and edge blocks using a 2-level hierarchical partition. It uses a novel dual sliding windows method to process graphs. Ligra [26] is a lightweight in-memory graph computing system. In Ligra, the memory requirement is critical since a graph must be in the memory before processing. Ligra+ [27] is a successor of Ligra by using compression techniques to reduce the size of a graph. GraphBuilder [13] provides a scalable framework for graph loading, extraction, and transformation.

Pregel [20] is a distributed programming framework for graph computing by providing a set of APIs. It uses a synchronous superstep model to synchronize the execution of nodes among a distributed computing environment. Distributed GraphLab [19] and PowerGraph [8] are graph computing frameworks for data mining and machine learning algorithms with large-scale data.

Apriori was proposed in [1, 2]. It has been widely discussed in [3, 4, 12, 15, 17, 21–24, 32]. In [3, 4], the authors proposed an implementation of Apriori by using the prefix tree. In [15, 17, 21, 22, 24], some parallel and distributed implementations of

Apriori with MapReduce [7] were proposed. In [12], the authors implemented Apriori based on Hadoop. In [23], the authors provide a hash-based algorithm, DHP, for mining association rules. The difference between this method and Apriori is the way to generate the frequent itemset candidates. In Apriori, a prefix tree is used to generate the frequent itemset candidates, while in DHP, a hash table is used. In [24], the infrequent itemsets mining based on MapReduce was discussed. In [32], the authors proposed a hash-based method to discover the maximal frequent itemsets.

3 The proposed method

3.1 Apriori algorithm

The Apriori algorithm used in this paper is based on the work proposed in [4]. In [4], it uses the prefix tree to express all subsets of a set of items. Based on the prefix tree, the frequent k -itemsets can be calculated iteratively. Let I be a set of items, S_k be all subsets of I with k items, and $|I| = n$. An n level prefix tree T can be used to represent all subsets of I , where the node in the first level of T contains S_1 , nodes in the second level of T contain S_2 , nodes in the third level of T contain S_3 , and so on. An example of using the prefix tree to represent all subsets of I with $n = 5$ is shown in Fig. 3.

Let D be a set of transaction records and I be a set of items. To calculate all the frequent k -itemsets of D based on the prefix tree, the execution of Apriori is composed of two phases, *initial* and *iterative*.

Phase 1 In the initial phase where $k = 1$, the frequent 1-itemsets are calculated by scanning D once to obtain the support of each 1-itemset. If the support of a 1-itemset is greater than the minimum support, the 1-itemset is a frequent 1-itemset. Otherwise, the support of the 1-itemset is set to -1 to indicate that the itemset is not a frequent one.

Phase 2 In the iterative phase where $k > 1$, Apriori uses the frequent $(k - 1)$ -itemsets generated in the $(k - 1)$ th level of the prefix tree to generate k -itemset candidates. To determine whether a k -itemset candidate is frequent, Apriori traverses the prefix

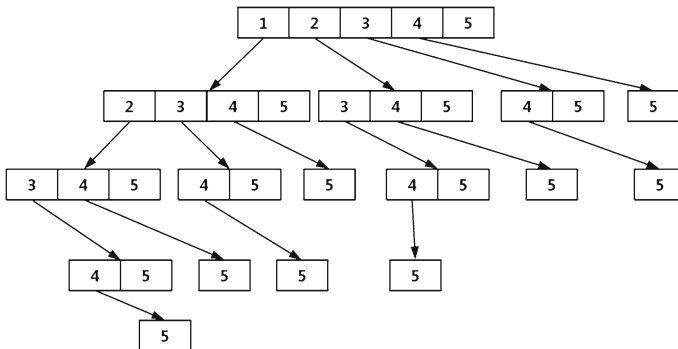


Fig. 3 A prefix tree for 5 items

tree iteratively based on the transaction records to get the support of each k -itemset candidate. If the support of a k -itemset candidate is greater than the minimum support, then it is a frequent k -itemset. Otherwise, the support of the k -itemset is set to -1 .

The Apriori algorithm is give as follows:

```

Algorithm Apriori ( $D, I, T$ )
/*  $D$  is the set of transaction records */
/*  $I$  is the set of all items in  $D$  */
/*  $T$  is the prefix tree with level and  $T = \emptyset$  initially */

/* Initial phase */
1. Build the 1-level prefix tree  $T$ ;
2.  $T = T \cup T$ ;
3. Scan  $D$  once to obtain the support of each 1-itemset;
4. if (the support of a 1-itemset  $\leq$  minimum support) the
   support of the 1-itemset is set to -1;

/* Iterative phase */
5.  $k=2$ ;
6. Candidates_Generation ( $k, T$ );
7. while (Candidates_Generation ( $k, T$ ) produce new nodes)
8. {
9.    $T = \text{Apriori\_c} (k, D, T)$ ;
10.   $k++$ ;
11.  Candidates_Generation ( $k, T$ );
12. }
End of Apriori

Algorithm Candidates_Generation ( $k, T$ )
/*  $T$  is the prefix tree */
1. let  $p$  and  $q$  be 2 frequent ( $k-1$ )-itemsets;
2. if (the items of  $p$  and  $q$  are the same except the last one)
3. {
4.   Add a  $k$ -itemset candidate  $exc$  with the same ( $k-2$ )
   items and different 2 last items to the corresponding
   position in the  $k$ th level of  $T$ ;
5.   if (one of the subset of  $exc$  with  $k-1$  items is not a
   frequent ( $k-1$ )-itemset) the support of  $exc$  is set to -1;
6. }
End of Candidates_Generation

Function Apriori_c ( $k, D, T$ )
/*  $D$  is the set of transaction records */
/*  $T$  is the prefix tree with level =  $k-1$  */
1. Build the  $k$ -level of prefix tree  $T$  based on  $T$ ;
2. For each transaction record  $r$  in  $D$  do
3. {
4.   Use  $r$  to traverse  $T$  iteratively;
5.   If the traverse reached a leaf node of  $T$ , the support of
   the corresponding  $k$ -itemset is increased by 1;
6. }
7. if (the support of a  $k$ -itemset  $\leq$  minimum support) the
   support of the  $k$ -itemset is set to -1;
8. return  $T$ ;
End of Apriori_c

```

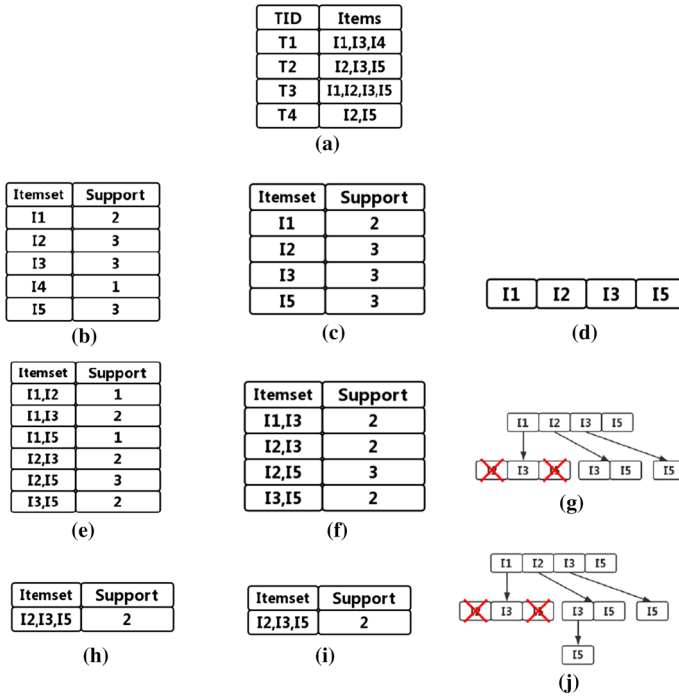


Fig. 4 An example of using Apriori for FIM. **a** Transaction records, **b** 1-itemset candidates, **c** frequent 1-itemsets, **d** 1-level prefix tree, **e** 2-itemset candidates, **f** frequent 2-itemsets, **g** 2-level prefix tree, **h** 3-itemset candidates, **i** frequent 3-itemsets, **j** 3-level prefix tree

The time complexity of Apriori is $O(k^2 \subseteq |D| \subseteq \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} C(|I|, i))$ based on the method proposed in [4]. An example of using algorithm Apriori (D, I, T) for FIM is shown in Fig. 4. In Fig. 4a, a set of transaction records $D = \{T_1, T_2, T_3, T_4\}$ is given and $I = \{I_1, I_2, I_3, I_4, I_5\}$. In the initial phase, we can obtain the 1-itemset candidates, the frequent 1-itemsets with support > 1 , and the one-level prefix tree as shown in Fig. 4b–d, respectively. In the iterative phase, when $k = 2$, we can obtain the 2-itemset candidates, the frequent 2-itemsets with support > 1 , and the two-level prefix tree as shown in Fig. 4e–g, respectively. When $k = 3$, the 3-itemset candidates, the frequent 3-itemsets with support > 1 , and the three-level prefix tree are shown in Fig. 4h–j, respectively.

3.2 Graph computing method

To use the graph computing method to compute FIM, the process can be divided into two phases, *converting* phase and *computing* phase:

Phase 1 In the converting phase, we convert the transaction records to graph data. Given a set of transaction records D and a set of all items of D , denoted as I , we can convert D to a graph data $G = (V, E)$ by using the following rules:

Rule 1 For each transaction record r in D , it denotes as a vertex v in V . The vertex ID of v is the record ID of r .

Rule 2 If two transaction records have k items in common, there will be an edge between two vertices and the attributes associated with the edge is the set of IDs of k items, where $k = 1, \dots, |I|$.

Phase 2 In the computing phase, we determine the frequent k -itemsets based on G and the prefix tree T . From G , we can derive G_k that is the corresponding graph of all k -itemsets in D , where $k = 1, \dots, |I|$. Since each k -itemset in D has a corresponding connected component in C_k . The support of a k -itemset is the number of vertices in the corresponding connected component. Given the k -itemset candidates in T , to determine whether a k -itemset candidate is frequent, we only need to find the corresponding connected component of the k -itemset candidate in C_k and compute the number of vertices (counter) in the corresponding connected components. If the counter is greater than a threshold (minimum support), then this k -itemset is frequent.

The algorithm to use the graph computing method to calculate the frequent itemsets is given as follows.

```

Algorithm FIM_GC ( $D, T, I, G$ )
/*  $D$  is the set of transaction records */
/*  $T$  is the prefix tree with level and  $T = \emptyset$  initially */
/*  $I$  is the set of all items in  $D$  */
/*  $G$  is the converted graph data of  $D$  */
1. Convert  $D$  to  $G$  based on rules 1 and 2;
2. Build the 1-level prefix tree  $T$ ;
3.  $T = T \cup T'$ ;  $k = 1$ ;
4. do
5. {
6.   For each  $k$ -itemset candidate in  $T$  do
7.   {
8.      $s = \text{FIM\_CC}(G, k\text{-itemset.attribute\_set})$ ;
9.     if ( $s >$  minimum support)
10.      the support of the  $k$ -itemset is  $s$ ;
11.     else the support of the  $k$ -itemset is -1;
12.   }
13.    $k++$ ;
14. } while (Candidates_Generation( $k, T$ ) produce new nodes)
End of FIM_GC
    
```

```

Algorithm FIM_CC ( $G, \text{attribute\_set}$ )
1. labels = {0, ...,  $|V|-1$ } initialized such that labels[ $i$ ]= $i$ ;
2. for each edge  $e$  in  $G$  do  $F_e(e, \text{attribute\_set})$ ;
3. Return the counter of vertices in the connected component;
End of FIM_CC
    
```

```

Function  $F_v(\text{vertex}, \text{new\_label})$ 
1. labels[ $\text{vertex}$ ] =  $\text{new\_label}$ ;
End of  $F_v$ 
    
```

```

Function  $F_e(\text{edge}, \text{attribute\_set})$ 
1. if ( $\text{attribute\_set}$  is a subset of attributes of  $\text{edge}$ )
2. {
3.    $m = \min(\text{labels}[\text{edge.source}], \text{labels}[\text{edge.destination}]);$ 
4.    $F_v(\text{edge.source}, m)$ ;
5.    $F_v(\text{edge.destination}, m)$ ;
6. }
End of  $F_e$ 
    
```

In the graph computing method, the converting phase (Phase 1) will be executed only once. Its time complexity is $O(|D|^2)$. In the computing phase, the maximum number of frequent itemset candidates processed in the k th iteration is $C(|I|, k)$. The time complexity of this phase is $O(\sum_{i=1}^k C(|I|, i) * |E|)$.

3.3 ANG algorithm

The difference between the graph computing method and Apriori is the way to compute the support of k -itemset. Apriori uses the transaction records to traverse the prefix tree iteratively to calculate the supports of k -itemset candidates, while the graph computing method uses the connected components algorithm to compute the supports of k -itemsets.

When k is small, Apriori can be very efficient. However, Apriori will be very inefficient when k becomes large because of the deeper recursion depth. It indicates that the execution time of Apriori is mainly depending on the level of prefix tree traversed. For the graph computing method, it computes a support of a k -itemset by executing the connected components algorithm once. The time of executing multi-attributes connected components algorithm for different k -itemsets is almost the same. Therefore, the execution time of the graph computing method is mainly depending on the number of k -itemsets.

In Apriori algorithm, the number of k -itemset candidates, in general, is much less than the number of k -itemsets in the prefix tree. We observe that the number of k -itemset candidates is large when k is small. While k become large, the number of k -itemset candidates decreases sharply. Table 1 shows the number of k -itemset candidates of a set of transaction records with different minimum supports percentage s . The minimum support is defined as s times the number of transaction records. The 1-itemset candidates are the whole items, and the k -itemsets candidates are depending on frequent $(k-1)$ -itemsets. From Table 1, we can see that the number of k -itemset candidates decrease greatly when $k > 2$.

Apriori is very efficient when k is small while the graph computing method with the prefix tree can accelerate the computation of the support of k -itemset candidates when k is large. By using this feature, we propose the ANG algorithm to perform FIM. In ANG, initially the Apriori method is used when k is small. When k is large, the

Table 1 The number of k -itemset candidates

	$s = 0.1\%$	$s = 0.2\%$	$s = 0.3\%$	$s = 0.4\%$
1-Itemsets	1000	1000	1000	1000
2-Itemsets	318,003	274,911	242,556	200,028
3-Itemsets	158,413	30110	7881	1788
4-Itemsets	5493	2719	737	200
5-Itemsets	3140	1631	266	53
6-Itemsets	1427	826	61	11
7-Itemsets	494	303	11	1

graph computing method is applied. We need to determine the value of k such that the execution can be switched from the Apriori method to the graph computing method.

Let N_i be the number of items in the i th transaction record, CA_k be the number of k -itemset candidates, t_{rk} be the time of one transaction record traversing a prefix tree with depth k , t_{ck} be the time to execute the connected components algorithm with k items. The time to compute the support of k -itemset candidates in Apriori is $\sum C_{N_i}^k * t_{rk}$. The time to compute the support of k -itemset candidates in the graph computation method is $CA_k * t_{ck}$. When the time of Apriori is greater than the time of the graph computation method, we switch to the graph computing method, i.e., when the Equation (2) is satisfied.

$$\sum C(N_i, k) * t_{rk} > CA_k * t_{ck} \tag{2}$$

The algorithm of ANG is given as follows.

```

Algorithm ANG ( $D, T, G$ )
/*  $D$  is the set of transaction records */
/*  $T$  is the prefix tree with level and  $T = \emptyset$  initially */
/*  $G$  is the converted graph data of  $D$  */

1. Build the 1-level prefix tree  $T$ ;
2.  $T = T \cup T'$ ;
3. Scan  $D$  once to obtain the support of each 1-itemset;
4. if (the support of a 1-itemset  $\leq$  minimum support) the
   support of the 1-itemset is set to -1;
5.  $k=2$ ;
6. Candidates_Generation ( $k, T$ );
7. while (Equation (2) is not satisfied)
8. {
9.   Apriori_c ( $k, D, T$ );
10.   $k++$ ;
11.  Candidates_Generation ( $k, T$ );
12. }
13. while ( $k$ -itemset candidates are not empty)
14. {
15.   Build  $k$ -level prefix tree  $T'$  based on  $T$ ;
16.   for each  $k$ -itemset candidate do
17.   {
18.      $s = \text{FIM\_CC}(G, \text{candidate.attribute\_set})$ ;
19.     if ( $s <$  minimum support) support of the  $k$ -itemset
       is set to -1; set corresponding support of  $k$ -itemset
       =  $s$ ;
20.      $k++$ ;
21.     Candidates_Generation ( $k, T'$ );
22.   }
23. }
End function

```

The time complexity of ANG is $O(j^2 \subseteq |D| \subseteq \sum_{i=1}^{j-1} C(|I|, i)) + O(\sum_{i=j}^k C(|I|, i) * |E|)$, where j and k are the first and the last iterations performed by Algorithm $\text{FIM_CC}(G, \text{candidate.attribute_set})$ in Algorithm $\text{ANG}(D, T, G)$, respectively. The execution flow of the ANG algorithm is shown in Fig. 5.

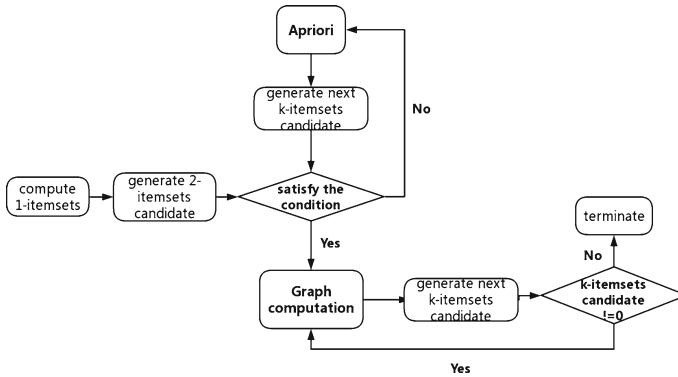


Fig. 5 The execution flow of the ANG algorithm

4 Experimental results

To evaluate the performance of ANG, we have implemented ANG algorithm along with Apriori, DHP, and the graph computing method. We use the set of transaction records in [11] as the test sample. The set contains 61100 transaction records and 1000 items. Items in transaction records are uniform distributed, that is, each item has the same influence to the experiment conducted.

Table 1 shows the number of k -itemset candidates in the prefix tree with different minimum support percentages s for the test sample. Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 show the execution time (in seconds) of Apriori and the graph computing method for the k -

Table 2 The execution time (s) of Apriori and the graph computing method for k -itemset candidates with $s = 0.1\%$

	Apriori	Graph computing
2-Itemsets	8.54	130381.24
3-Itemsets	37.16	64949.35
4-Itemsets	102.12	2252.12
5-Itemsets	232.54	1287.43
6-Itemsets	438.68	713.6
7-Itemsets	711.11	247

Table 3 The execution time (s) of Apriori and the graph computing method for k -itemset candidates with $s = 0.2\%$

	Apriori	Graph computing
2-Itemsets	7.58	112713.51
3-Itemsets	31.59	12345.15
4-Itemsets	88.04	1114.79
5-Itemsets	198.78	668.71
6-Itemsets	374.29	330.4
7-Itemsets	608.63	151.5

Table 4 execution time (s) of Apriori and the graph computing method for k -itemset candidates with $s = 0.3\%$

	Apriori	Graph computing
2-Itemsets	7.37	99447.96
3-Itemsets	28.65	3231.21
4-Itemsets	78.71	302.17
5-Itemsets	176.29	106.4
6-Itemsets	333.26	30.5
7-Itemsets	541.42	7.7

Table 5 The execution time (s) of Apriori and the graph computing method for k -itemset candidates with $s = 0.4\%$

	Apriori	Graph computing
2-Itemsets	6.41	82011.49
3-Itemsets	24.91	733.07
4-Itemsets	68.76	82.71
5-Itemsets	155.02	21.74
6-Itemsets	291.69	6.6
7-Itemsets	474.55	1.2

itemset candidates shown in Table 1. From Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5, we have the following observation:

Observation 1: If the value of minimum support percentage increases, the time for the graph computing method to determine the frequent itemsets from the k -itemset candidates will be less than that of the Apriori method with smaller k .

For example, if s is 0.1%, the time for the graph computing method to determine the frequent itemsets from the 7-itemset candidates is 247 s, while that of the Apriori method is 711.11 s. When s is increased to 0.3%, the time for the graph computing method to determine the frequent itemsets from the 5-itemset candidates is 106.4 s, while that of the Apriori method is 176.29 s.

In ANG, Eq. (2) is used to determine when to switch from Apriori to the graph computing method. Given the test sample, in Eq. (2), $\sum C(N_i, k)$ can be computed for a given N_i and k . The value of t_{rk} is the time for each transaction record to traverse a prefix tree with depth k . The levels traversed for t_{rk} and $t_{r(k-1)}$ are k and $k-1$, respectively. t_{rk} can be approximated as $t_{rk} = t_{r(k-1)} + (t_{r(k-1)} - t_{r(k-2)}) = 2t_{r(k-1)} - t_{r(k-2)}$. Values of CA_k are shown in Table 1, where $k = 1, \dots, 7$. The value of t_{ck} can be obtained by executing the connected component algorithm with k items once.

For the case where $s = 0.3\%$ and $k = 5$, we have $\sum C(N_i, 5) = 689419357$, $t_{r5} = 2.56\mu s$ since $t_{r4} = 2.52\mu s$ and $t_{r3} = 2.48\mu s$, CA_5 is 266, and $t_{c5} = 0.37s$. Based on the values of $\sum C(N_i, 5)$, t_{r5} , CA_5 , and t_{c5} , the estimated time for the Apriori method and the graph computing method are 176.49 and 98.42 s, respectively. Given the test sample and $s = 0.3\%$, ANG will use the Apriori method to calculate the frequent itemsets when $k < 5$ and switches to the graph computing method after $k \geq 5$ since the condition given in Eq. (2) is satisfied.

Table 6 The estimated time (*s*) of Apriori and the graph computing method for *k*-itemset candidates with *s* = 0.1%

	Apriori	Graph computing
2-Itemsets	8.66	108121.02
3-Itemsets	37.13	53860.42
4-Itemsets	119.11	1977.48
5-Itemsets	233.02	1161.8
6-Itemsets	439.58	585.07
7-Itemsets	691.27	207.48

Table 7 The estimated time (*s*) of Apriori and the graph computing method for *k*-itemset candidates with *s* = 0.2%

	Apriori	Graph computing
2-Itemsets	7.91	93469.74
3-Itemsets	32.19	10538.5
4-Itemsets	95.35	978.84
5-Itemsets	199.24	603.47
6-Itemsets	376.78	338.66
7-Itemsets	596.57	127.26

Table 8 The estimated time (*s*) of Apriori and the graph computing method for *k*-itemset candidates with *s* = 0.3%

	Apriori	Graph computing
2-Itemsets	7.42	82469.04
3-Itemsets	28.62	2758.35
4-Itemsets	84.09	265.32
5-Itemsets	176.49	98.42
6-Itemsets	330.64	25.01
7-Itemsets	520.82	4.62

Table 9 The estimated time (*s*) of Apriori and the graph computing method for *k*-itemset candidates with *s* = 0.4%

	Apriori	Graph computing
2-Itemsets	6.29	68009.52
3-Itemsets	24.83	625.8
4-Itemsets	74.09	73.44
5-Itemsets	154.43	19.61
6-Itemsets	294.76	4.51
7-Itemsets	464.01	0.42

Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9 show the estimated execution of Apriori and the graph computing method based on the values of $\sum C(N_i, k)$, t_{rk} , CA_k , and t_{ck} for the test sample with *s* = 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, and 0.4%, respectively. Compare Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 and Tables 6, 7, 8 and 9, we can see that Eq. (2) can predict the switching points for ANG accurately for all test cases. Table 10 shows the execution time of Apriori, ANG, and the graph computing method for the test sample. From Table 10, we can see that ANG has the best performance among the three methods compared for all test cases.

Table 10 The execution time (s) of Apriori, ANG and the graph computing method

s	Apriori	ANG	Graph computing
0.1%	1546.15	1032.64	200067.72
0.2%	1324.12	905.69	127710.91
0.3%	1179.69	297.72	103529.93
0.4%	1036.31	145.55	83258.75

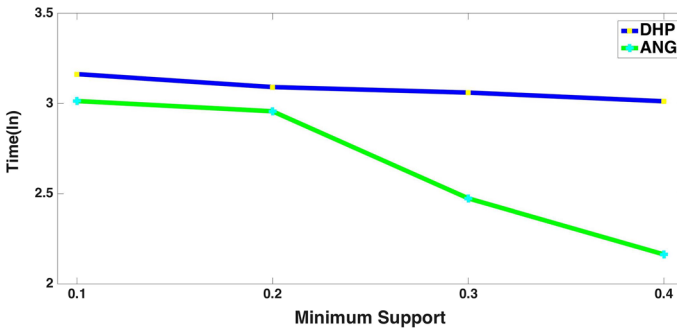


Fig. 6 The execution time (s) of ANG and DHP for test cases with different minimum support

In addition to the performance comparison of Apriori, ANG, and the graph computing method, we also compare the performance of ANG with DHP, another method for FIM. Figure 6 shows the execution time of ANG and DHP for the test cases with minimum support from 0.1 to 0.4. From Fig. 6, we can see that ANG outperforms DHP for all test cases.

5 Conclusions

In this paper, we have shown that how to use the graph computing method to perform frequent itemset mining. We also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of Apriori and the graph computing method when applied them to frequent itemset mining. Based on the discussions, we have proposed a hybrid method, ANG, by taking the advantages of Apriori and the graph computing method for frequent itemset mining. In ANG, initially, Apriori is used to compute the support of k -itemset candidates when k is small. When k becomes large, the graph computation method is used to compute the support of k -itemset candidates. We have derived a formula to determine when to switch from the Apriori method to the graph computing method. The experimental results show that the formula can predict the switching point accurately and ANG outperforms Apriori, DHP, and the graph computing method for all test cases.

Acknowledgements The work of this paper is partially supported by Shenzhen City Brach Committee under contract 2016-09.01

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