tkinter Tutorial for Designing Graphical User Interface in Data Visualization Tools like ComVisMD

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Abstract

An end user always intends that every application should be easy-to-handle, attractive and self-driven to offer its functionalities. The user interface decides the quality of an application, its sustainability as well as its productivity. Today's trend and need is to develop each and every application with easily understandable Graphical User Interface (GUI) to enhance the user interactivity, and directly or indirectly leading to visual analysis of data. A cross-platform framework like *tkinter* of Python's standard library, eases the job of programmer in designing GUI for many data visualization tools like ComVisMD (Compact Visualization of Multidimensional Data). The *tkinter* framework supports multiple platforms and provides many easy-to-use, quickly buildable system components. The purpose of this paper is to introduce such components through a tutorial and to show how can be they used to build a GUI-based application, and to further utilize such applications to analyze the data through visualization.

Index Terms- GUI, Widget, Framework, Window, WIMP, Event-driven Programming, Data Visualization.

1. INTRODUCTION

An interface can be used to establish an interaction and communication between machine (or software or application) and its users. This interface argument or parameter or point can be a dashboard, a menu, a simple display screen, even a mouse or a keyboard. *The designers of user interface are increasingly realizing that it is important to provide a high degree of end-user customization* [6]. In the very beginning the interface was only character-based or command-driven. In the present era, voice-controlled interfaces, gesture-based interfaces have also become pleasurable in comparison with Graphical User Interface (GUI), popular successor of character-based interface (or CUI - Character User Interface or Command-line User Interface) other than the devices. CUIs were in general for designing system programs like operating systems. The CUIs only accept alpha-characters, numeric-characters or some special-characters. These CUIs still maintain their space in the Computer Science. The next best successor of CUIs is GUI because of the cost-effective hardware advancements in terms of graphical terminals.

In today's world of Artificial Intelligence bringing automation to the concepts, Python is a widely used programming language which brings commendable, easy-to-use features. It is being used to develop many Machine Language and Data Science applications. Web applications, communications applications are also being developed using Python. GUI application development feature of the language is also popular among not only the software developers but also the researchers. The *tkinter is the only Graphical User Interface (GUI) framework that is built into the Python standard library* [1]. It is popular because of its cross-platform nature. It works with Linux, macOS and Windows through rendered system components. It helps to build the system quickly giving more weightage or preference to functionality rather than just spangled framework. The applications based on GUI are common because of the ease of interaction. Very easily, many options may be provided at a glance to make further exploration of the application. Python, the programming language, provides several choices for the programmers to design GUI based application including *wxPython*, *Tkinter*

and *PyQt*.

Every GUI application starts with building of basic component *window*. The window looks like a container to hold other GUI components. These are widgets or window gadgets, having a powerful functionality. Interestingly only one or two lines of code bring the components to action in the window. *The tkinter package (Tk interface) is the standard Python interface to the Tk GUI toolkit* [2]. As mentioned by Beniz and Epsindola in [4] *tkinter* arose as a good start for their GUI application, as it is the standard GUI package of Python. An visualization tool, ComVisMD (Compact Visualization of Multidimensional Data) developed using graphics package of Python is being transformed into its latest version using *tkinter*. In this paper we tried to introduce *tkinter* as an instrumental asset for the GUI developers in the form of a tutorial. The components of *tkinter*, additionally support in a way for the programmers to implement Event-driven programming also. Event-driven programming is a way of writing programs in which the actions (leading to events) of the user, decides the flow of execution. Event is a user action, like a mouse click or key press that causes a GUI application to respond. An association between 'a widget, an event and an event handler' is called binding. The event handler is executed when the event occurs in the widget.

2. DEFINITIONS

Irrespective of the programming language used, the GUI elements or components are very much common to all the programming languages like java, C++ or Python. These components are used specify the appearance of the user interface in graphical form. Such visual conventions represent information to be conveyed to the users of the GUI application. In general, these conventional components in the form of most common style are nicknamed to WIMP [8]: window, icon, menu, pointer. With reference to Shipman in [3], a GUI application element, *Window*, is a primary component and it is further augmented to contain many widgets (window gadgets or elements).

The table, Tab.1 lists few of such elements and their definition (meaning or purpose).

Element	**definition (meaning or purpose)**
Window	a rectangular area on a display screen
Top-level window	a window existing independently on screen, one can move it, minimize it, resize it and close it
Widget	a basic component (window gadget or object) of GUI application
Frame	a dedicated rectangular area of window, invisible container acts as a repository to hold other widgets child
Parent	parent-child relationship happens whenever widgets are created. A frame created will become parent to hold a label widget (a child)
Label	widget used to give a textual reference to other widget for identification
Button	widget containing text or an image that commands or triggers an event when pressed
Canvas	an area to display lines, rectangles, circles like shapes
Entry	a region where users can type message or text
Menu	a set of options available for the users is displayed on a display screen
Icon	a small graphical image to represent a closed window

Tab.1. Elements of GUI with definitions

3. LINES OF CODE FOR FEW WIDGETS

In this section we will show how few lines of code of Python language can be used to build GUI application.

In order to use any of the widgets of *tkinter* it is necessary to import the package as used in the line of code:

```
import tkinter as tk      #tk is the alias name for tkinter, in rest of the program 'tk' is used
```

Two lines used to create a window named '`win`' with title '`ComVisMD`':

```
win = tk.Tk()
win.title("ComVisMD")
```

The window created using these two lines is shown in figure, Fig.1.

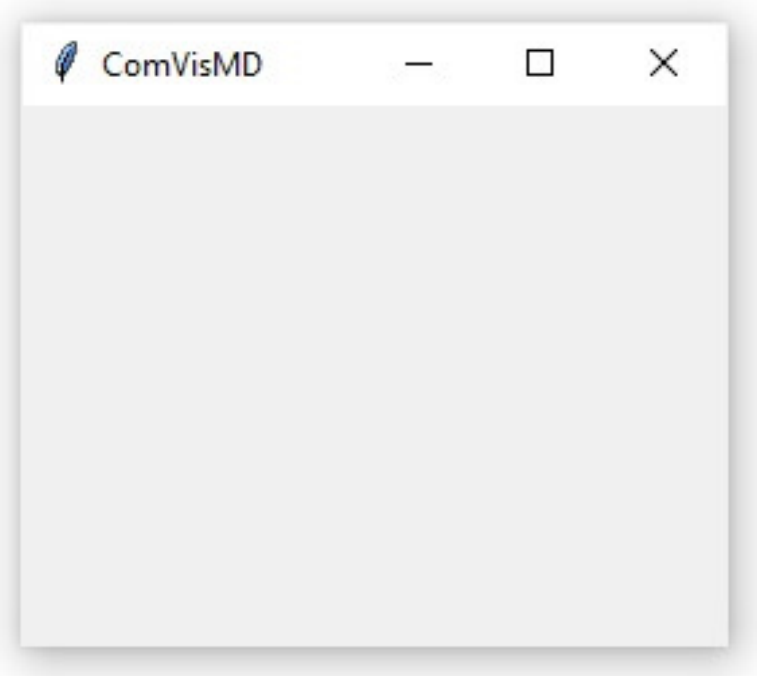

Fig.1. Creation of a window titled "`ComVisMD`"

```
label = tk.Label(win, text="Label") #code line used to add a label widget to a window, 'win':
button = tk.Button(win, text="Button", width=15, height=5) #A line used to add a button
                                                            #widget to a window
entry = tk.Entry(win)                    #used to add an entry widget to a window, 'win':
```

Note that `entry.get()` can be used to retrieve the entered value for `entry` widget.

```
frame = tk.Frame(win) #to add a frame widget to a window, 'win':
```

The Python code (script) to create three frames in a window is shown in figure, Fig.2. The figure, Fig.3. shows the output.

```python
import tkinter as tk

window = tk.Tk()
window.title("Flag Frames")
window.minsize(200, 200)

frame1 = tk.Frame(master=window, width=125, height=50, bg="orange")

frame2 = tk.Frame(master=window, width=125, height=75, bg="white")

frame3 = tk.Frame(master=window, width=125, height=100, bg="green")

frame1.pack()
frame2.pack()
frame3.pack()

window.mainloop()
```

Fig.2. Python code to create 3 frames

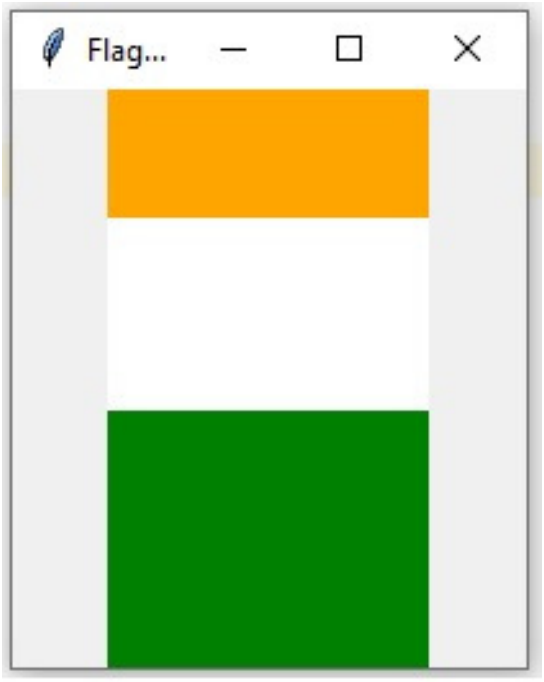

Fig.3. Output of the code of figure Fig.2.

In the figure, Fig.4. the widget ‘Label’ is used in the Python script to display all possible color names, from the color ‘snow’ to color ‘gray99’. The background of the label is colored with respective color name with option, ‘background’. The labels are created in a window named ‘root’ with title ‘Color Chart’. The grid method used with label is a geometry manager of Python used to place the widget at proper row and column position of the display screen. The output of the script is shown in the figure, Fig.5.

```
root = Tk()
root.title("Color Chart")
row = 0
col = 0
for color in COLORS:
  e = Label(root, text=color, background=color, font=(None, -FONT_SIZE))
  e.grid(row=row, column=col, sticky="ew")
  row += 1
  if (row > 30):
    row = 0
    col += 1

root.mainloop()
```

Fig.4. Python script to use label widget to display all possible colors

Fig.5. Output of the script of figure, Fig.4.

The script of the figure, Fig.6. shows the use of the widget ‘Button’ for event handling.

```python
import tkinter as tk
window = tk.Tk()
window.title("Events")
window.minsize(200, 200)

def handle_click(event):
    print("The button was clicked!")

button1 = tk.Button(text="Click one!")
button1.bind("<Button-1>", handle_click)
button1.grid(row=0, column=0)

button2 = tk.Button(text="Click two!")
button2.bind("<Button-1>", handle_click)
button2.grid(row=1, column=1)

window.mainloop()
```

Fig.6. Python script to use button widgets to handle the simple events

A method ‘bind’ is used to connect the button and the functionality of handler. When user presses the button then the respective event is happening to display the connecting message. The output of the script given in the figure, Fig.6. is shown in the figures Fig.7. and Fig.8.

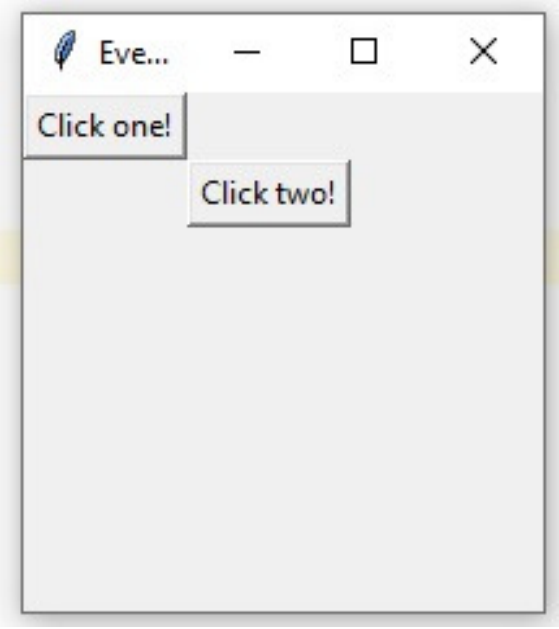

Fig.7. The buttons ‘Click one!’ and ‘Click two!’ created in a window named ‘root’

```
C:\Users\sbu\PycharmProjects\
The button was clicked!
The button was clicked!
```

Fig.8. The events handled after pressing the buttons ‘Click one!’ and ‘Click two!’

The code shown in the figures Fig.9. and Fig.10 can be used to design a menu driven program. The menu is designed with three options, **File**, **Help** and **Exit**. A function can be linked with an option through 'command' option. At the click of the option, the linked function is executed. The output of the program is shown in the figures Fig.11. and Fig.12.

```
from tkinter import *
from tkinter.filedialog import askopenfilename

def NewFile():
    print("Procedure to be designed to create a New File!")
def OpenFile(): #method to open an existing file through dialog box
    name = askopenfilename()
    print(name)
def About():
    print("Menu-driven program developed by SBD")

win = Tk()
win.title("Menu driven programming")
```

Fig.9. First part of a python program to define functions for 'menu options' of a menu-driven program

```
menu = Menu(win)
win.config(menu=menu)
filemenu = Menu(menu, tearoff=0)
menu.add_cascade(label="File", menu=filemenu)
filemenu.add_command(label="New", command=NewFile)
filemenu.add_command(label="Open", command=OpenFile)


helpmenu = Menu(menu, tearoff=0)
menu.add_cascade(label="Help", menu=helpmenu)
helpmenu.add_command(label="About", command=About)

exitmenu = Menu(menu, tearoff=0)
menu.add_cascade(label="Exit", menu=exitmenu)
exitmenu.add_command(label="Quit", command=win.destroy)

win.mainloop()
```

Fig.10. Second part of the python program to define menu of a menu-driven program

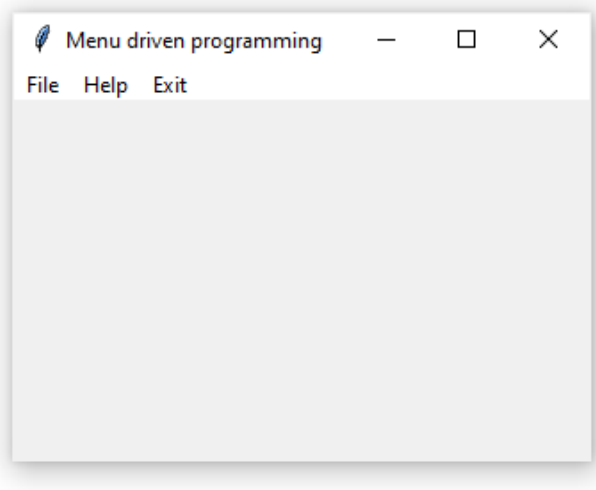

Fig.11. Output showing the display of menu

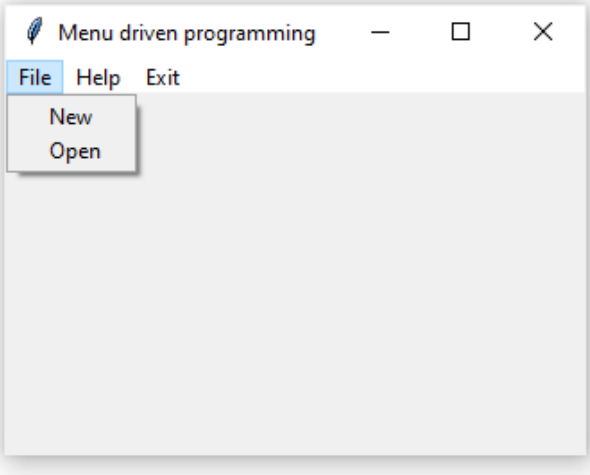

Fig.12. Output after clicking menu option

4. GUI FOR COMVISMD

ComVisMD is the name given to the system developed for **Com**pact **Vis**ualization of **M**ultidimensional **D**ata. Multi-featured data present in two-dimensional format motivated us to design such a system to project data-features in different dimensions of a mapped display like: **column** (vertical dimension), **row** (horizontal dimension), **color** dimension for classification of displayed cells, **hole** dimension to inscribe proportional value on the cell, **shape** dimension to decide the shape of a cell of categorical value.

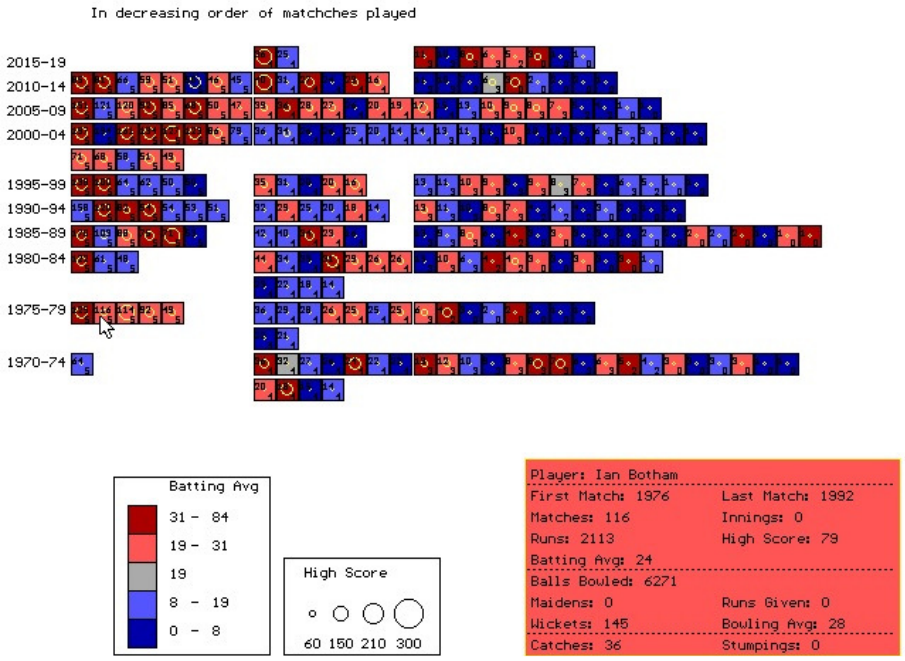

Fig.13. Map of the 1st version of ComVisMD

The map shown in the figure, Fig.13. is the first version of the map project using C language [9]. In the latest version of ComVisMD, the interface is developed using *tkinter*. A main widget, 'Menu' is used to provide different options for the user to move on. The designed menu as GUI is shown in the following figure, Fig 14. It has options 'File', 'Dimension' and 'Quit'. The option 'File' is used to chose a CSV (Comma Separated Value) file for visual analysis by selecting the 'OpenCSV' option from the drop-down menu. The drop-down menu has second option to view the raw content of the CSV file by chosing the 'Display' option.

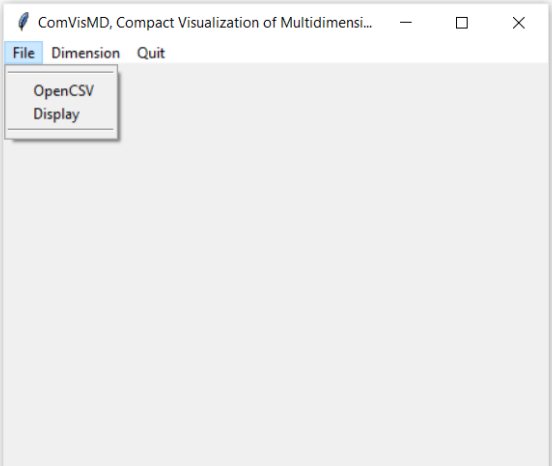

Fig.14. 'Main Menu' and 'File Menu' of ComVisMD

When the user chose the ‘OpenCSV’ option a dialogue window is displayed to choose the file from the current directory, as shown in the figures, Fig 15 and Fig.16. After the selection of a CSV file like ‘Auto’, user can now choose ‘Display’ option to see the contents in raw form, as shown in the figure, Fig 17.

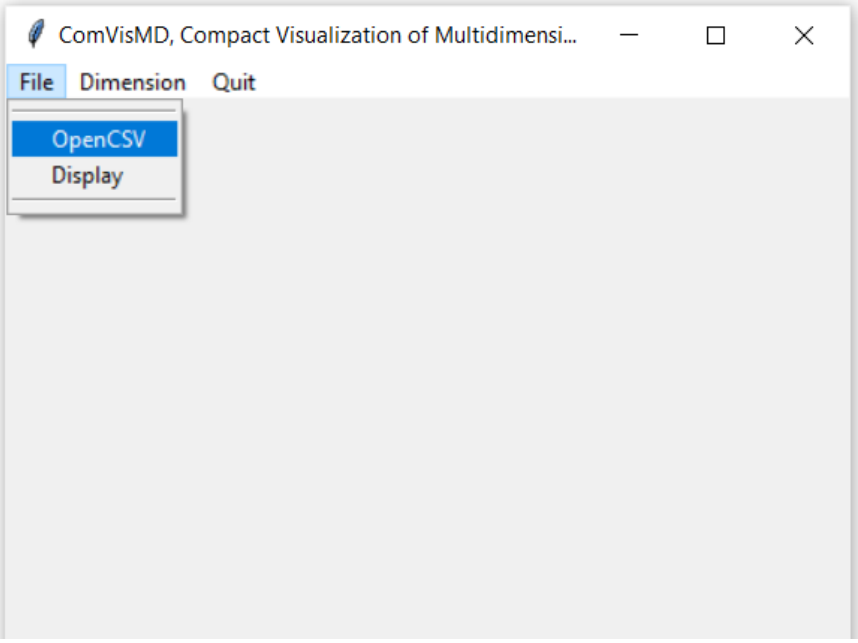

Fig.15. ‘OpenCSV’ option chosen from the ‘File Menu’ of ComVisMD

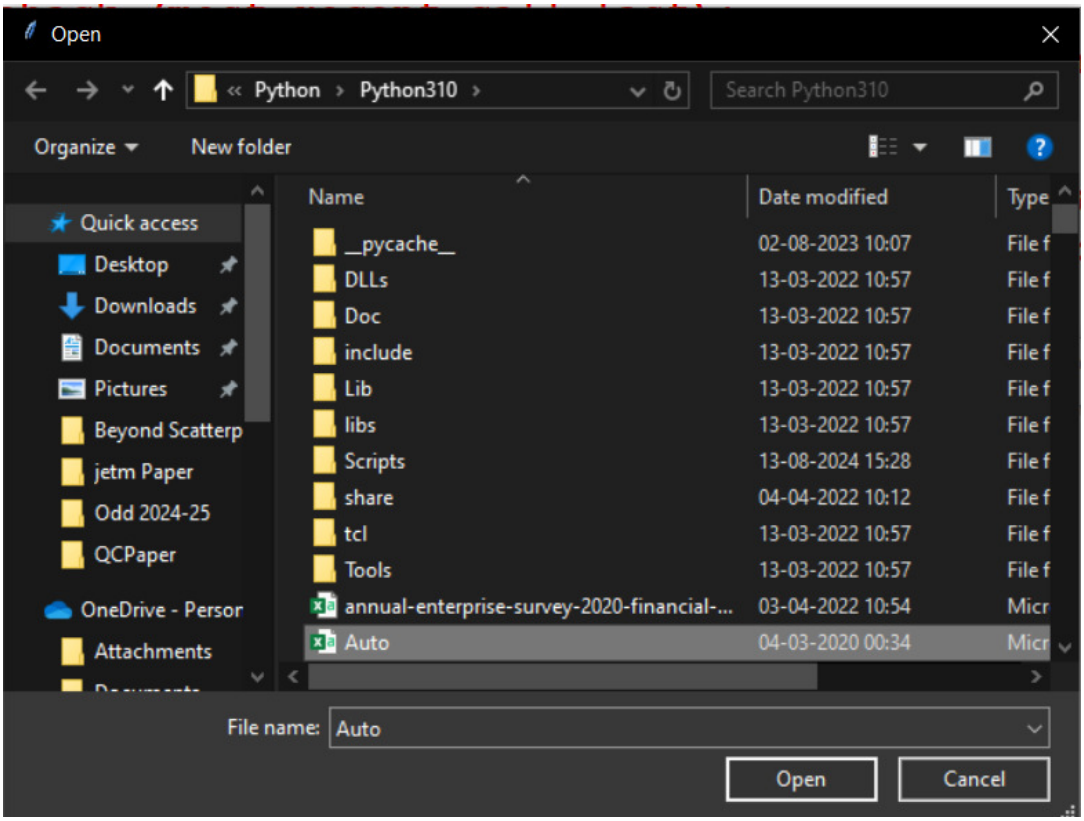

Fig.16. Dialogue window to show the selection of a file, ‘Auto’

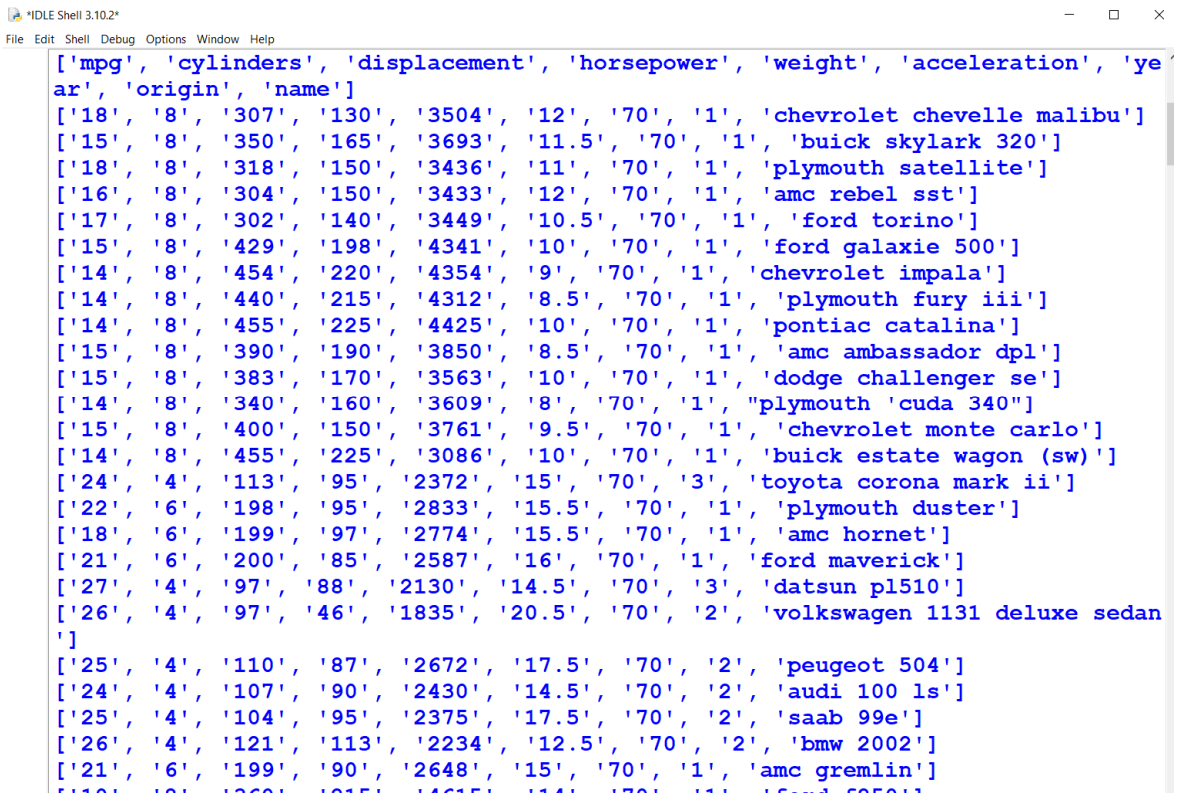

Fig.17. Raw contents of ‘Auto’ file

The next option, ‘Dimension’ has two groups of options. In the first group, there are five options for our Compact Display’s map selection and the second group option ‘Map View’ is used to display the compact map to display the cells (objects or records) of selected CSV file for example, ‘Auto’. The ‘Horizontal’ option of first group, is used to select one of the attributes to map the objects in horizontal direction. ‘Vertical’ for vertical direction, ‘Color’ to color the respective ‘cell’, ‘Hole’ to inscribe a scaled circle in the ‘cell’ and ‘Shape’ to decide the cell shape like, square, triangle or hexagon. Figure, Fig 18 shows the options of ‘Dimension’ option of main menu.

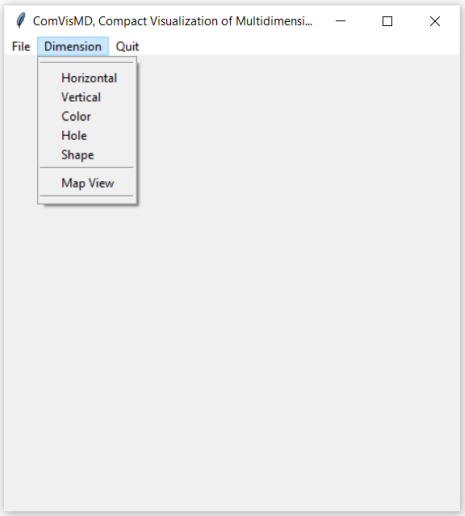

Fig.18. Two groups of options of ‘Dimension’ option

The following figures, Fig.19, Fig.20, Fig.21, Fig.22, Fig.23, Fig.24 reflects the change in colors of respective options when they are chosen for ‘Horizontal’, ‘Vertical’, ‘Color’, ‘Hole’, and ‘Shape’ respectively.

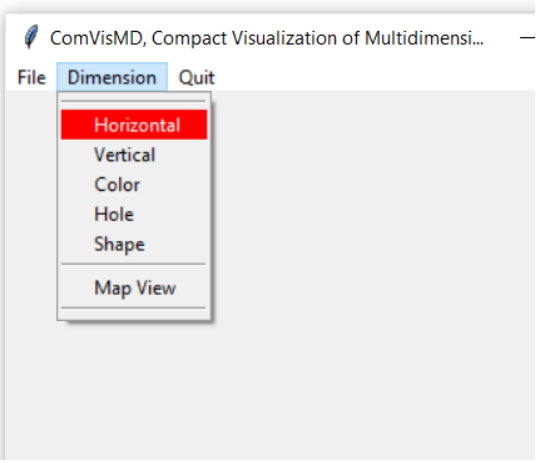

Fig.19. ‘Horizontal’ option selected from ‘Dimension’ option

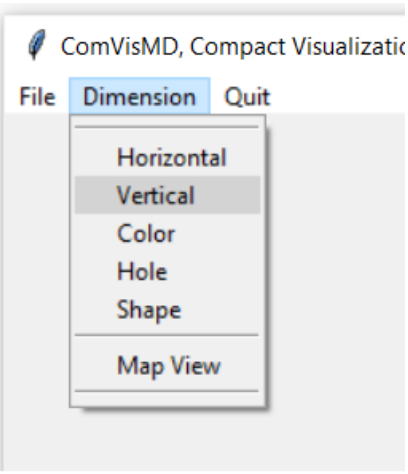

Fig.20. ‘Vertical’ option selected

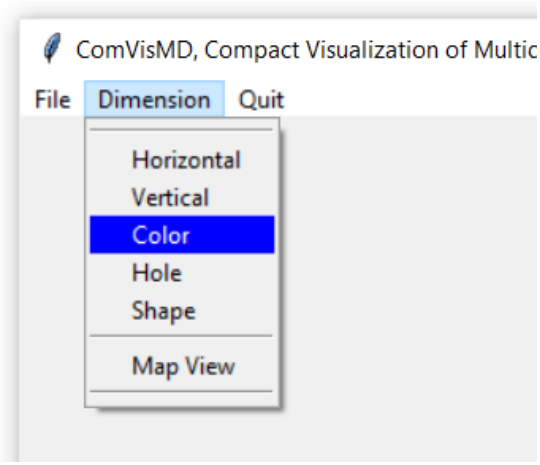

Fig.21. ‘Color’ option selected

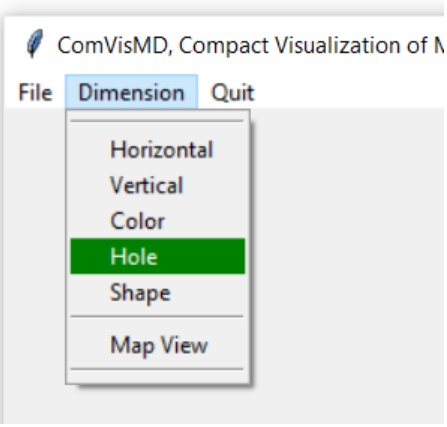

Fig.22. ‘Hole’ option selected

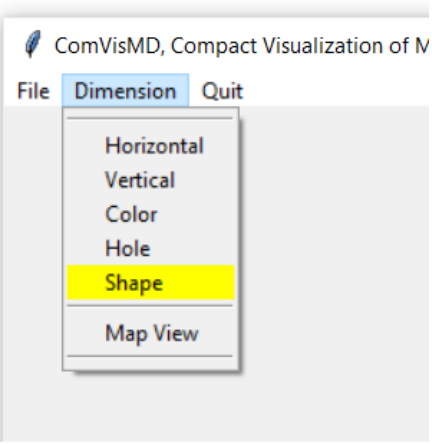

Fig.23. ‘Shape’ option selected

The second version of ComVisMD map with reference to [10] is shown in the figure, Fig.24. projected using graphics package of Python. The map displayed in compact form contains the objects in the form of respective shaped cells from the CSV file 'Team16Countries.csv'. The attribute (dimension) 'HighScore' is chosen as 'Horizontal' option, 'Matches' is chosen as 'Vertical' option, 'Runs' is chosen as 'Color' option, 'BatAvg' is chosen as 'Hole' option. These all four dimensions (attributes) are 'numerical' attributes. The fifth option, 'Country' dimension is chosen for 'Shape' option and it is a categorical attribute. In this way the user can make the choice among the attributes of the CSV file and bring these dimensions for display of the objects in the form of cells in a compact display format. The user of the tool can automatically derive correlation among the objects and also observe that most interesting objects with dark-orange-colored cells are at one corner (lower-left) of the map. This helps in visual analysis of the data. The user can click on any cell to display whole characteristics of the objects, as shown in a large rectangle at the right bottom corner of the figure. In the latest version of ComVisMD, the *tkinter* is used for the development of user interface as discussed earlier in this section.

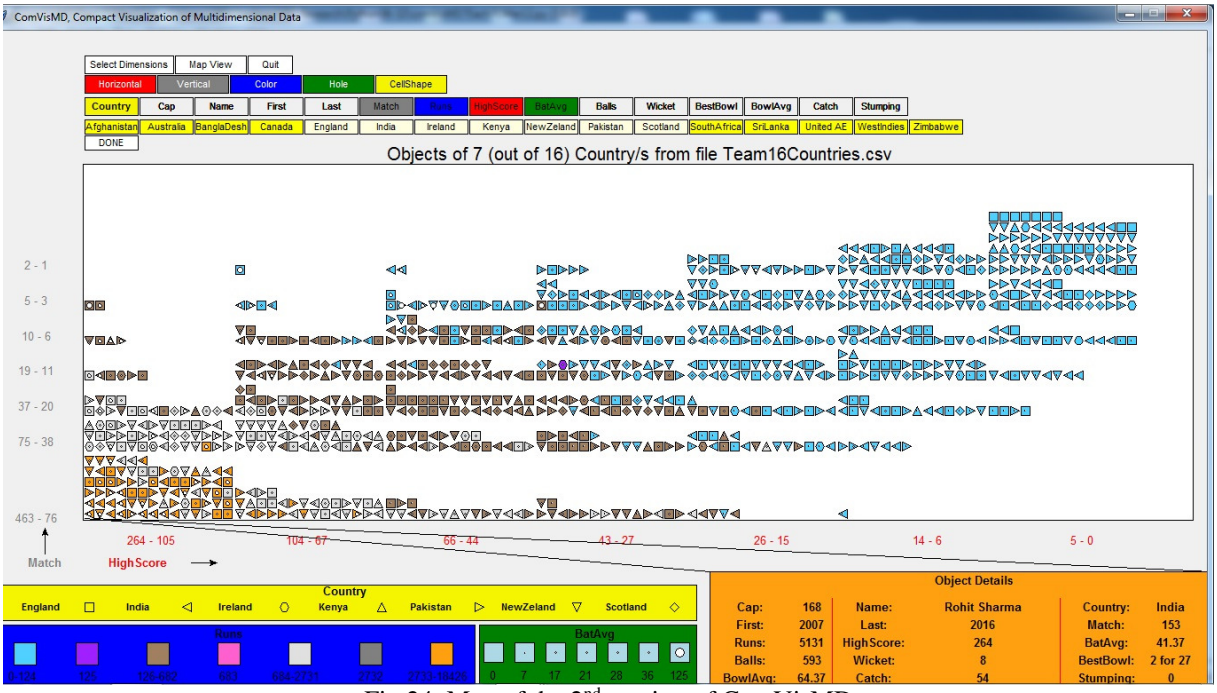

Fig.24. Map of the 2nd version of ComVisMD

5. CONCLUSION

An effort is made in this paper to make the reader familiar with a GUI framework in the form of easily understandable tutorial with self-explanatory lines of code. Few of the commands can be used directly without even knowing detailed programming. In a simpler way a GUI framework helps a programmer to design an application without writing much of the complex code. The developers can also make use of *tkinter* to develop rapid GUI applications, in turn using them for designing tools for data visualization and analysis.

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