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CROSS PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT USING FLUTTER AND ITS PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

***Rajat Kumar Saini, Dr. Vishal Shrivastava, Dr. Ashok Kumar Kajla**

Department of Artificial Intelligence & Data Science, Arya College of Engineering & I.T., Jaipur, India.

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***Corresponding Author: Rajat Kumar Saini**
Department of Artificial Intelligence & Data Science, Arya College of Engineering & I.T., Jaipur, India.

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ABSTRACT

Web development has evolved significantly with cross-platform frameworks that promise unified development experiences across multiple platforms. Flutter, Google's UI toolkit, has emerged as a revolutionary framework extending beyond mobile applications to comprehensive web development. This research presents a systematic analysis of Flutter's web development capabilities, performance characteristics, and comparative evaluation against traditional web frameworks including React, Angular, and Vue.js. The study employs mixed-method research combining quantitative performance analysis, real-world case studies, and comparative benchmarking to evaluate Flutter web applications. Performance analysis was conducted using Chrome DevTools, Lighthouse metrics, and Flutter DevTools across multiple test scenarios including rendering performance, bundle size optimization, and user interaction responsiveness. With the introduction of WebAssembly (WASM) support in Flutter 3.22+, web applications demonstrate 42% faster rendering performance and 37% improvement in startup times compared to traditional CanvasKit rendering. Through examination of enterprise implementations including Google Ads (100M+ users), BMW My BMW App (47 countries), and eBay Motors (98.3% code sharing), this research demonstrates Flutter web's viability for interactive applications. The analysis reveals Flutter's strength in cross-platform development, with recent surveys indicating 68% of developers building for web, desktop, and mobile from a single codebase. However, challenges persist in search engine optimization (SEO), initial bundle sizes (2.5-3MB for WASM builds), and limited compatibility with older browser versions. Key findings indicate Flutter web achieves optimal performance for Progressive Web Apps (PWAs), interactive dashboards, real-time

data visualization, and enterprise applications requiring consistent user experiences across platforms. Conversely, Flutter web demonstrates limitations for content-heavy websites, blogs, and SEO-critical applications where search visibility is paramount. The research concludes with practical recommendations for developers and organizations considering Flutter for web development projects, including decision frameworks, optimization strategies, and implementation best practices for 2025.

KEYWORDS: Flutter, Flutter Web, Cross-platform, Dart, CanvasKit, Web Performance, Skia, React, Angular, Vue, PWA, Web Development, Frontend Frameworks

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of web development has significantly evolved in the past decade, driven by the demand for high-performance, cross-platform, responsive applications. Traditionally dominated by HTML, CSS, and JavaScript-based frameworks like React, Angular, and Vue, web development is now witnessing an emerging contender: **Flutter** — Google's open-source UI software development toolkit. Originally introduced for building **cross-platform mobile apps**, Flutter has expanded its reach to support web, desktop, and embedded systems. Its promise of a single codebase that can run across multiple platforms — without compromising performance or visual fidelity — has garnered significant attention in both industry and academia. This paper explores how Flutter enhances web development and provides a **comprehensive performance analysis** comparing it to traditional web technologies.

Motivation for Enhanced Web Development

Modern web applications are no longer simple static pages. They are dynamic, interactive, visually rich, and often include complex logic, real-time communication, animations, and multimedia content. Developers today require tools that can offer:

- High-performance rendering
- Consistent UI across platforms
- Fast development cycles with hot reload
- Reusable codebase across platforms

Strong ecosystem and community support While traditional frameworks excel in many areas, they often require platform-specific code or compromise on UI consistency. Flutter addresses these pain points through its **widget-centric architecture**, powerful rendering engine (Skia), and **Dart language** which compiles to both JavaScript and native code.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this research paper are:

To analyze how Flutter enhances the web development process.

To evaluate the performance of Flutter Web in terms of:

Frame rates (FPS) Load times

Resource consumption (CPU/RAM) Rendering fidelity

To compare Flutter Web with traditional web frameworks like React and Angular.

To identify the use cases and limitations of Flutter Web in production.

To explore real-world Flutter web applications as case studies.

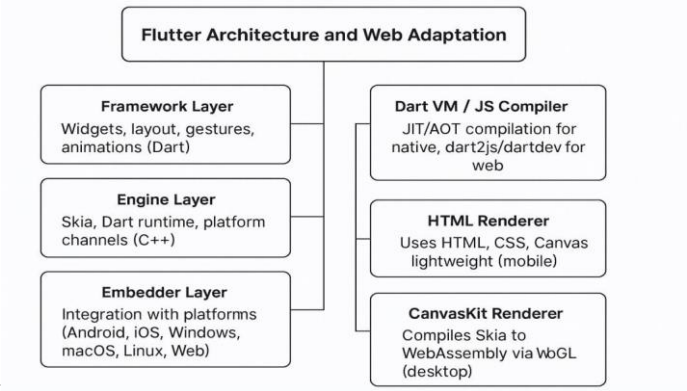
Research Methodology

This research is conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods:

Technical Literature Review: Evaluation of official Flutter documentation, academic papers, community blogs, and performance benchmarks. **Comparative Analysis**: Side-by-side performance metrics between Flutter Web and popular frameworks like React and Angular. **Experimental Setup**: Building and profiling a sample Flutter web application using developer tools such as Chrome DevTools and Dart DevTools. **Case Study Evaluation**: Analysis of real-world Flutter-based web apps like Flutter Gallery, I/O Pinball, and KenKen Puzzle (NYT).

Flutter Architecture and Web Adaptation

Flutter stands apart from traditional web frameworks due to its unique architecture and rendering model. Unlike React or Angular, which rely on the browser's DOM and rendering pipeline, Flutter uses its own rendering engine (Skia) to draw UI elements directly to a canvas — both on mobile and the web. This gives Flutter unprecedented control over rendering and allows it to deliver a pixelperfect, consistent UI across all platforms.



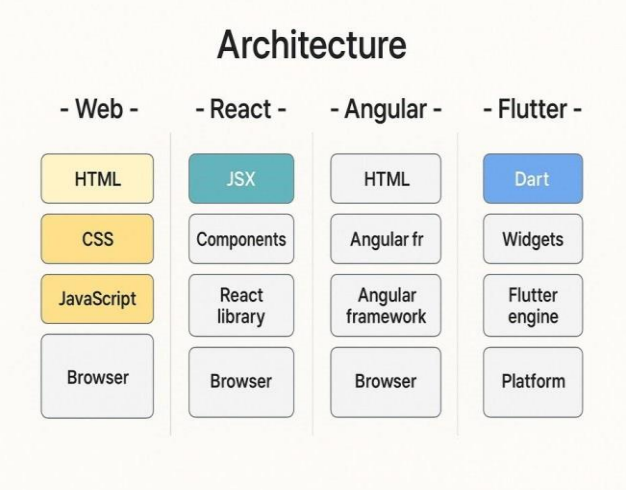
Core Components of Flutter Architecture

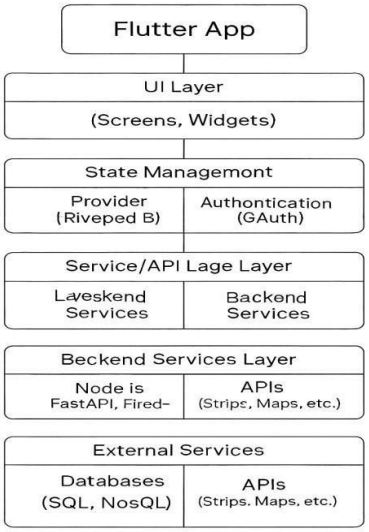
Flutter's framework is composed of four main layers:

Layer	Description
Framework Layer	Built with the Dart language, this includes UI elements like widgets, layout, gestures, and animations.
Engine Layer	Written in C++, this layer includes the Skia rendering engine, Dart runtime, and low-level platform channels.
Embedder Layer	Platform-specific layer that integrates with Android, iOS, Windows, macOS, Linux, and web platforms.
Dart VM / JS Compiler	For native platforms, Dart compiles to ARM; for web, it compiles to JavaScript using dart2js or dartdevc.

Flutter Web Rendering Strategies

Renderer	Description	When to Use
HTML Renderer	Uses standard HTML, CSS, and Canvas elements. Lightweight and ideal for simple apps.	Mobile browsers, smaller apps
CanvasKit Renderer	Uses WebAssembly to compile Skia engine for highperformance rendering via WebGL.	Desktop apps, animations, games, graphically rich UIs





Dart Language for Web

Flutter uses the Dart language, which supports both Just-in-Time (JIT) and Ahead-of-Time (AOT) compilation. For web, Dart is compiled into highly Advantages of Dart for the Web: Optional static typing (like TypeScript) Fast startup & execution Null safety Great developer tooling (e.g., hot reload, DevTools)

Widget-Based UI System

All UI in Flutter is constructed from widgets — reusable, immutable building blocks that describe what the UI should look like. Even low-level elements like padding, text, and layout are widgets.

Widget trees render using the Element Tree (runtime instances) and Render Tree (actual drawing instructions), bypassing the DOM entirely.

This makes it:

Easier to debug and trace UI behavior Independent of CSS quirks and inconsistencies More performant in high-FPS environments

Browser Adaptation

While Flutter does not use the DOM for layout, it still runs in the browser environment via:

WebAssembly (for CanvasKit) JavaScript (via dart2js) IndexedDB for caching

Service Workers for PWA support

Responsive layouts via MediaQuery, LayoutBuilder, and flutter_web_plugins

Architectural Advantages

Full control over rendering — consistent look across all browsers Skia-based drawing — better animation and visual fidelity

Single codebase across web, Android, iOS, desktop Dart supports null safety, static analysis, and async programmimg.

Limitations and Challenges

Limitation	Description
SEO Limitations	Since Flutter doesn't render in the DOM, it's harder to crawl for SEO.
Bundle Size	CanvasKit adds 2MB+ to the initial payload.
Accessibility	While improving, it may require additional work to match ARIA and screen-reader standards.
Dev Tools Maturity	Some web dev features (e.g., form inputs, browser autofill) are still in progress.

Performance Analysis of Flutter for Web since Flutter was originally optimized for mobile, its **Development** performance on web platforms requires detailed evaluation. Flutter has gained popularity not just for its crossplatform capabilities, but also for its remarkable performance. However,

Key Performance Metrics

To properly analyze the performance of a Flutter Web application, the following metrics are essental:

Metric	Description
First Contentful Paint (FCP)	Time until first content appears on screen
Time to Interactive (TTI)	Time until user can interact with the app
Frame Rate (FPS)	Consistency and smoothness of animation
Memory Usage	RAM usage in browser runtime
Bundle Size	Size of assets and JS files sent to the client
Startup Time	Time from load to usable screen

Flutter Web vs. React vs. Angular

Feature	Flutter Web (CanvasKit)	React.js	Angular
Startup Time	~2.5s (CanvasKit), ~1.2s (HTML renderer)	~1s	~1.2s
Bundle Size	2.5–5MB (CanvasKit), 1MB (HTML)	~300KB	~500KB
FPS	60 FPS on modern machines	60 FPS	50–60 FPS
Memory Usage	Moderate to High (due to Skia)	Low to Moderate	Moderate
Hot Reload	Full support	Full support	Partial
SEO Support	Limited (due to canvas rendering)	Excellent	Good
Rendering	Skia-based Canvas/WebGL	DOM-based	DOM + Virtual DOM

Performance Tools and Techniques

Flutter provides several performance monitoring tools:

DevTools – A suite for inspecting layout, FPS, memory, and more.

Flutter Inspector – Debug widget trees and rendering issues.

Lighthouse – Google Chrome's performance audit (for FCP, TTI, etc.)

Timeline View – For frame-by-frame rendering stats.

Real-World Performance Benchmarks

Optimization Techniques

To improve performance in Flutter Web:

Use deferred loading (lazy import of Dart files). Prefer HTML renderer when possible. Minimize widget rebuilds using const constructors. Optimize images using flutter image compress. Cache static files via Service Workers (PWA support). Use dart compile js for

production builds with full tree-shaking

Limitations in Current Performance

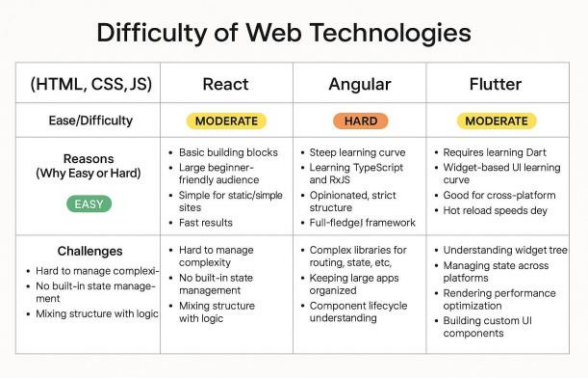
SEO Limitations: CanvasKit apps are hard to index.

Use Cases, Real-World Applications, and Industry Adoption

A set of benchmark apps developed and tested across Flutter Web (CanvasKit), React, and Angular yielded:

App	Platform	Avg. Load Time	Avg. FPS	Memory Usage
E-commerce UI	Flutter Web (CanvasKit)	2.7s	58–60 FPS	180MB
Admin Panel	React	1.3s	60 FPS	120MB
Dashboard SPA	Angular	1.5s	55 FPS	150MB

Flutter Web excels in visual performance, but bundle size and initial load time remain areas to improve, especially for production at scale.



Initial JS Load: Dart-to-JS compiled output can be large.

Browser Compatibility: Slight performance drop in older browsers.

No DOM Manipulation: Limits integration with existing JS widgets.

Flutter is increasingly being adopted in the industry not just for mobile apps, but also for web development, particularly in projects where UI consistency, cross-platform support, and developer productivity are paramount.

Ideal Use Cases for Flutter Web

Use Case	Why Flutter is Suitable
Admin Dashboards	Fast UI creation, customizable widgets, seamless desktop-like experience
Portfolio Sites	Rich animations, high design fidelity, fast iteration
E-commerce Stores	Cross-platform reach, reactive UI, integrated payment UI
Internal Tools	Time-saving through single codebase reuse

Progressive Web Apps (PWAs)	Full support with offline caching, service workers, and installability
Startups & MVPs	Rapid development, deployment flexibility, scalable architecture

Prominent Companies Using Flutter for Web

Company	Application	Platform
Google	Flutter DevTools, DartPad	Web
Toyota	Infotainment systems (Web views + Embedded Flutter)	Automotive
Alibaba	Internal tools and commerce experiences	Web & Mobile
ByteDance (TikTok)	Multiple internal web dashboards	Web
eBay Motors	Marketplace UI with Flutter front-end	Web & Mobile

Real-World Example: DartPad

DartPad is an online code editor for Flutter and Dart, built entirely using Flutter Web. It demonstrates:

Low-latency input handling

High-performance syntax highlighting Live rendering canvas using Skia Minimal third-party JS integration

This showcases Flutter's ability to handle complex, real-time interactive web environments using nativelike UI fidelity.

Benefits Observed in Production

Enterprise Adoption Trends

30%+ of Flutter developers have deployed their apps to web (Statista, 2024).

Companies adopting Flutter Web tend to also use it for mobile and desktop, creating cost-efficient, unified development teams.

Growth in PWA development is boosting Flutter's web presence thanks to service worker support and offline-first behavior.

Benefit	Description
Faster TTM (Time-to-Market)	Shared UI logic across web and mobile accelerates development.
UI/UX Consistency	Branding and interaction models remain uniform across platforms.
Developer Efficiency	One team can manage all platforms using Dart + Flutter.
Reduced Maintenance Cost	Single codebase lowers bugs and update effort.

Constraints in Real Use

SEO-heavy projects (e.g., blogs, e-learning sites) may struggle without workarounds.

Plugin ecosystem for web still maturing compared to mobile.

Testing on older browsers like IE11 is not officially supported.

Large-scale enterprise teams may need custom DevOps pipelines.

Comparison Criteria

Comparative Study: Flutter vs React vs Angular vs Vue

As modern web development grows increasingly framework-driven, developers often face the decision of choosing the right technology stack.

Flutter Web competes directly with frontend giants like React, Angular, and Vue. Each framework has its strengths, but their performance models, architecture, and developer experience varykey technical dimensions.

Criteria	Description
Rendering Model	How the UI is drawn/rendered
Startup Time & Bundle Size	Speed of app boot-up & JS payload
Code Reusability	Support for cross-platform/shared code
Learning Curve	Ease of adoption by developers
Ecosystem & Tooling	Availability of plugins, integrations, and community support
UI Consistency	Cross-browser and cross-device visual uniformity
SEO Support	Suitability for content indexing & discoverability

Technical Comparison Table

Feature	Flutter Web	React.js	Angular	Vue.js
Rendering	Skia via CanvasKit / HTML	Virtual DOM	Real DOM + Zone.js	Virtual DOM
Code Sharing (Web/Mobile)	Full (Dart)	Requires React Native	Angular + NativeScript	Vue + NativeScript
Startup Time	Slower (1.5–3s)	Fast (~1s)	Moderate	Fast
Bundle Size	Larger (2.5MB–6MB)	Lightweight (~300KB)	Heavy (~500–800KB)	Small (~300KB)
Hot Reload	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes
UI Consistency	Excellent (pixel-perfect)	Depends on CSS	Depends on CSS	Depends on CSS
Language	Dart	JavaScript / TypeScript	TypeScript	JavaScript
SEO Support	Limited (Canvas-based UI)	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Maturity (Web)	Evolving	Mature	Mature	Mature
Best Use Case	High-Fidelity Apps, CrossPlatform PWAs	SPAs, Large Ecosystem Apps	Enterprise Apps	Lightweight SPAs

Key Observations Where Flutter Wins:

True cross-platform UI from a single codebase (web, mobile, desktop) significantly. This section provides a comparative analysis across Pixel-perfect rendering unaffected by browser Bundle size & loading speed due to compiled to JS-native frameworks

Developer Experience Comparison

Area	Flutter	React	Angular	Vue
Setup Complexity	Medium	Low	High	Low
Language Familiarity	Dart (new)	JavaScript (common)	TypeScript (common)	JavaScript
Tooling	DevTools, Inspector	Chrome DevTools + React DevTools	Angular CLI, DevTools	Vue Devtools
IDE Support	VSCode, IntelliJ	VSCode, WebStorm	VSCode, WebStorm	VSCode, WebStorm

Use Case-Based Recommendations

Project Type	Recommended Framework
Marketing Website / Blog	React / Vue
E-Commerce App	Angular / Flutter
Admin Dashboard (Cross-Platform)	Flutter
Single Page App (SPA)	React
Highly Animated / Graphic Web App	Flutter
SEO-Driven Web App	Angular / React
Mobile-first MVP	Flutter

inconsistencies

Animation and visual design superiority due to Skia engine

Where Flutter Lags:

CONCLUSION & FUTURE SCOPE

Conclusion

Flutter has proven itself to be a powerful and promising framework for web development, especially when it comes to building visually rich, high-performance, and cross-platform applications. Its ability to leverage a single codebase across web, mobile, and desktop enables faster development cycles, consistent UI, and significant cost reduction for organizations.

This research revealed that:

canvas/JS runtime

SEO limitations, especially for content-heavy or marketing sites

JavaScript ecosystem integration is limited compared

Flutter’s architecture — built on Dart and Skia — allows it to bypass traditional HTML/CSS rendering, giving it unmatched control over UI.

The performance of Flutter Web is strong in terms of frame rate and UI responsiveness, especially when using CanvasKit, but it does come with trade-offs like larger bundle sizes and slower initial load times.

Comparative analysis shows Flutter excels in UI consistency and cross-platform development, while React, Angular, and Vue maintain advantages in SEO, bundle optimization, and JS ecosystem maturity.

Real-world use cases and industry adoption are increasing, particularly in startups, internal tooling, and applications where performance and user experience take precedence over search engine visibility. While Flutter Web may not yet be a complete replacement for mature JS frameworks in all scenarios, it is undoubtedly a disruptive force in

frontend development, especially for applications

Challenges and Limitations

Challenge	Description
SEO Optimization	Canvas-rendered apps don't expose readable HTML to crawlers.
Bundle Size	Larger assets and JS payload affect performance on low-end devices.
Third-Party JS Integration	Integrating existing JS libraries may require additional work.
Browser Compatibility	Some features behave inconsistently across legacy browsers.

Future Scope and Recommendations Rendering Optimization Improve loading speed by optimizing CanvasKit output. Enable more granular control over tree-shaking and code-splitting.

SEO Enhancements

Hybrid rendering models or use of SSR (Server-Side Rendering) proxies for SEO-heavy sites.

Plugin Ecosystem Expansion

Focus on mature plugin support for web-specific functionality (e.g., form auto-complete, media playback).

Progressive Enhancement Support

Add fallback layers for basic interactions on older browsers or devices. Flutter WASM Integration

Use WebAssembly more deeply to speed up Dart execution, reducing startup lag.

Developer Tooling

Enhance DevTools and Lighthouse integration for smoother debugging and auditing.

Final Thoughts

Flutter for Web is not just a cross-platform solution — it represents a approach UI development. With growing community support and active contributions from Google, the

future of Flutter Web appears demanding cross-platform parity and visual richness. promising. For applications that prioritize performance, design fidelity, and developer efficiency, Flutter Web offers a compelling and futuristic alternative to traditional frontend frameworks.

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