



# BEACH SAFETY APP: A Mobile-First Approach to Real-Time Beach Condition Monitoring and Safety Alerts

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**Abstract**— Beaches, while popular for recreation, pose numerous safety risks due to changing weather, water conditions, and limited on-site information. Traditional methods of conveying beach safety, such as signage or manual updates, often lack timeliness and fail to reach visitors effectively. This paper presents *Beach Safety App*, a mobile-first solution aimed at bridging the gap between beachgoers and real-time safety information. The app integrates real-time environmental data, such as weather and marine data, with a geolocation-based interface to provide users with instant and location-relevant safety notifications.

Using a modular system architecture, the backend is powered by FastAPI, PostgreSQL, and APScheduler, while the frontend is developed using Flutter for cross-platform responsiveness. Real-time data synchronization and offline support are built in to ensure continuous access to critical information. A user-centered design approach, coupled with Agile development methodology, facilitated iterative feedback and improvements.

The solution was evaluated through user testing and performance metrics, demonstrating improved awareness and user engagement in safety practices. By enhancing communication between authorities and beachgoers, this system contributes to safer beach experiences. The proposed architecture also serves as a model for similar real-time public safety applications.

**Keywords**— Beach safety, mobile application, real-time monitoring, FastAPI, Flutter, geolocation alerts, offline access, public safety.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Beaches are among the most visited natural destinations worldwide, offering recreation, relaxation, and tourism opportunities. However, they also pose serious safety risks, including rip currents, unpredictable weather conditions like wave, wind and swell parameters, etc.. These hazards can result in injuries or fatalities if timely information is not communicated to beachgoers.

Current beach safety mechanisms—such as physical signage, flags, or verbal announcements by lifeguards—often lack real-time responsiveness. These traditional systems are static, localized, and insufficient in effectively informing a constantly moving and digitally connected public. Tourists, especially those unfamiliar with local conditions or warning signs, are particularly vulnerable.

As a result, there is a critical need for a real-time, user-friendly solution that empowers users with accurate, up-to-date information on beach conditions, wherever they are.

### 1.2 Significance

In an era where mobile technology is deeply embedded in everyday life, leveraging smartphones to provide safety information presents an innovative and scalable solution. A mobile-first system can transform how beach safety information is delivered—moving from reactive measures to proactive alerts.

Real-time safety data can:

- Reduce accidents by warning users of hazards such as suitability score and safety index.
- Increase public trust in beach management authorities.
- Support faster emergency responses.
- Educate users on safe beach practices through dynamic content.

Thus, the proposed *Beach Safety App* seeks to improve not only individual safety outcomes but also broader public health and disaster preparedness at coastal areas.

### 1.3 Research Questions

To address this challenge, the research explores the following questions:

- **RQ1:** How can mobile technology improve beach safety awareness?
- **RQ2:** What technical architecture best supports real-time beach condition monitoring?
- **RQ3:** How effective is the proposed solution for end users in terms of usability and awareness?

### 1.4 Overview

This project introduces *Beach Safety App*, a mobile application designed to bridge the beach safety information gap using a mobile-first, data-driven architecture. The system is built with a **Flutter** frontend for cross-platform UI and a **FastAPI** backend to handle API requests and data processing. **PostgreSQL** is used as the primary database, with **Redis** caching implemented to improve real-time performance. The app periodically updates beach conditions using **APScheduler**, while **JWT-based authentication** ensures secure user access.

Key features of the app include:

- Real-time alerts for weather, marine, and safety hazards.
- Interactive map interface showing nearby beaches and live conditions.
- Offline access to cached safety data.
- A modern, responsive design adaptable to multiple screen sizes.

The system follows an **Agile development methodology** with iterative testing and feedback from target users. The paper evaluates the technical performance, user satisfaction, and comparative advantages of the proposed solution against existing systems.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional beach safety systems rely on physical cues such as flag warnings, signboards, and lifeguard announcements. While effective to some extent, these methods are localized and often lack timeliness or dynamic updates. Projects like Australia's **BeachSafe app** provide basic beach condition information and surf life-saving service details but are often limited by static data and lack real-time updates [1].

Some coastal regions have implemented sensor-based systems (e.g., buoys for tide and wave monitoring), yet these solutions typically do not integrate with user-facing mobile apps [2]. There remains a need for a comprehensive, real-time communication system accessible via mobile devices.

Mobile applications have played a key role in disaster management in recent years. Apps like **FEMA Mobile** and **MyShake** use real-time data to send alerts about earthquakes, floods, and other emergencies [3][4]. These apps combine geolocation, user alerts, and push notifications, which significantly improve user preparedness. However, the majority of these platforms are not tailored to recreational safety or beach-specific environments.

Most existing systems suffer from the following limitations:

- Lack of **real-time** integration with dynamic data feeds (e.g., wave height, swell parameters)
- Poor support for **offline access**
- Limited use of **location-based personalization**

- Weak user engagement strategies (e.g., no visual map alerts or interactivity)

These limitations reduce the relevance and effectiveness of safety alerts, especially for tourists unfamiliar with local hazard indicators [5].

To overcome these gaps, modern real-time technologies are increasingly adopted:

- **FastAPI** is used for efficient asynchronous API responses and integration with background scheduling (e.g., **APScheduler**) for periodic updates [6].
- **Redis** caching enables near-instant data delivery to the client [7].
- **Flutter** provides robust mobile interfaces with location tracking and offline capability, while state management tools like **Provider** ensure real-time UI updates [8].
- Location-based services (LBS) enhance personalization of safety notifications and hazard awareness.

These technologies provide the basis for an integrated beach safety solution with scalable and low-latency infrastructure.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

### A. Requirement Gathering

The initial phase of this research involved a detailed requirements gathering process focused on understanding the safety needs of beachgoers. This was achieved through secondary research on common hazards such as rip currents, swell and wave levels, and weather variability, as well as an analysis of existing safety apps like BeachSafe and FEMA. Informal interviews with frequent beach visitors and lifeguards helped validate the user needs and guided the selection of core features. These included real-time alerts, geolocation-based notifications, offline data availability, and a user-friendly interface suitable for all age groups.

### B. System Design

The system design follows a modular client-server approach. The mobile frontend communicates with the backend using RESTful APIs. This separation of concerns ensures scalability, ease of maintenance, and smooth data flow. The backend handles data aggregation and user authentication, while the frontend is responsible for delivering a responsive user interface. This architecture was selected to support low-latency updates and seamless integration of live environmental data through scheduled background tasks.

For the technical stack, Flutter was chosen for frontend development due to its cross-platform compatibility and expressive UI components. FastAPI was selected for the backend because of its performance and asynchronous capabilities, making it suitable for real-time applications. PostgreSQL serves as the primary relational database for storing user and beach condition data, while Redis was integrated as a caching layer to reduce API response times. The APScheduler library is employed to periodically fetch external data sources, such as StormGlass and INCOIS APIs. JSON Web Tokens (JWT) are used for stateless and secure user authentication.

### C. Development Methodology

The development methodology adopted was Agile, enabling continuous iteration and user feedback throughout the project lifecycle. Weekly sprints allowed for modular development and testing of individual features. Regular code reviews, along with integration testing and UI walkthroughs, ensured quality and usability. Tools such as GitHub, Postman, and VS Code supported collaborative development, API testing, and efficient version control.

### D. Evaluation Method

To evaluate the system's effectiveness, a mix of technical and user-centric methods is planned. Performance metrics will include API latency, database read/write speeds, and caching efficiency. Usability testing will involve real users interacting with the app to assess the clarity, accessibility, and relevance of alerts. Surveys and interviews will capture qualitative feedback on user experience, while a comparative analysis with existing apps will highlight the improvements offered by this solution.

#### I. System Architecture

The architecture of the *Beach Safety App* is designed to support real-time data processing, high availability, and cross-platform accessibility. The system follows a modular **client-server model** with clearly defined responsibilities for frontend and backend components. The architecture

prioritizes low-latency communication, scalable data flow, secure user management, and offline capabilities to ensure consistent performance even in low-connectivity beach environments.

#### 4.1 Overall Architecture

At a high level, the application consists of three core layers: the **client-side mobile application**, the **backend API services**, and the **data synchronization infrastructure**. The mobile application serves as the user interface, enabling real-time interaction, location tracking, and alert visualization. The backend provides RESTful APIs for data delivery, manages authentication, schedules data updates, and handles persistent storage. Real-time environmental data is periodically fetched from third-party sources and processed before being delivered to clients.

The communication flow is as follows:

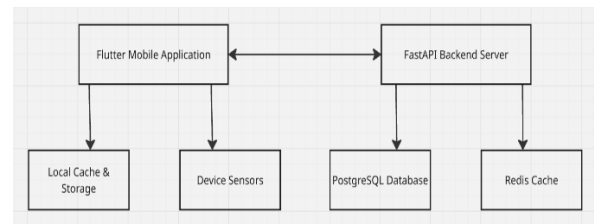


Fig 1: Overall System Architecture

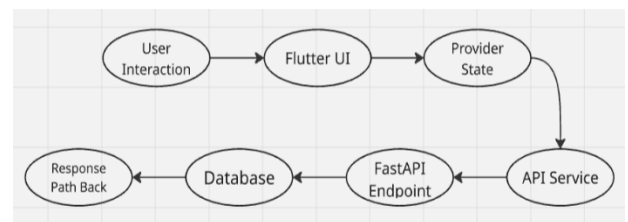


Fig 2: User Request Flow

#### 4.2 Backend Components

The backend system is developed using **FastAPI**, a modern Python web framework that offers asynchronous support for handling multiple concurrent requests. FastAPI ensures minimal response latency and smooth integration with background schedulers and external APIs. Backend endpoints are responsible for serving beach condition data, managing user authentication, and responding to frontend requests in a stateless, secure manner.

##### 4.2.1 FastAPI Implementation

FastAPI endpoints are built to handle CRUD operations, background tasks, and security mechanisms. The API structure separates routes for authentication, data services, and utility functions, ensuring modularity and ease of scaling. Swagger and ReDoc documentation is auto-generated to assist in API testing and maintenance.

##### 4.2.2 Database Design and Optimization

**PostgreSQL** is used as the primary database to store structured data related to users, beach metadata, environmental logs, and alert history. The schema is normalized for efficient querying, with indexed fields for faster location-based lookups. Tables are periodically updated using automated tasks and linked via foreign key constraints to maintain relational integrity.

##### 4.2.3 Authentication System

The system implements **JWT-based authentication** for secure user sessions. Upon login, a signed token is generated and stored locally on the client. All subsequent requests include this token for verification. Access tokens are time-bound and refreshable, following best practices for REST API security.

#### 4.2.4 Task Scheduling with APScheduler

**APScheduler** runs background tasks at fixed intervals to fetch updated weather, tide, and UV index data from third-party APIs. These tasks are configured to run asynchronously and push updated entries to both the database and the **Redis cache** for efficient frontend delivery.

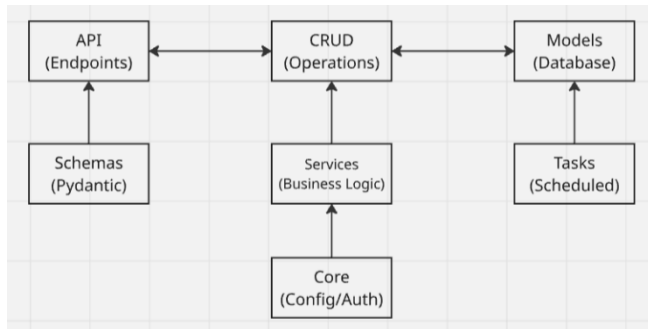


Fig 3 : Backend Data Flow and Scheduling Mechanism

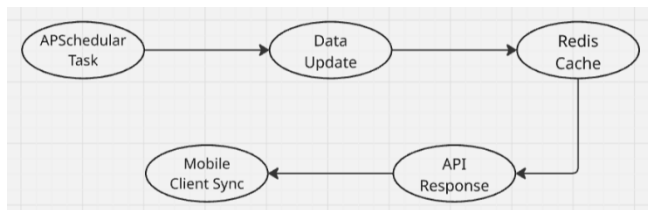


Fig 4 : Background Update Flow

### 4.3 Frontend Implementation

The mobile frontend is developed using **Flutter**, enabling a unified codebase for Android and iOS deployment. The application interface is built with modern design principles focusing on minimalism, accessibility, and real-time feedback.

#### 4.3.1 Flutter Architecture and Structure

The Flutter app follows a **clean architecture pattern**, separating UI, business logic, and data services. This makes the codebase scalable, testable, and easy to maintain. The UI layer is built using Flutter widgets, while API calls are handled via dedicated service classes.

#### 4.3.2 State Management Approach

State in the app is managed using the **Provider** package. It allows reactive data handling where the UI updates automatically in response to data changes. This is especially useful for live map overlays and updating alert banners in real-time.

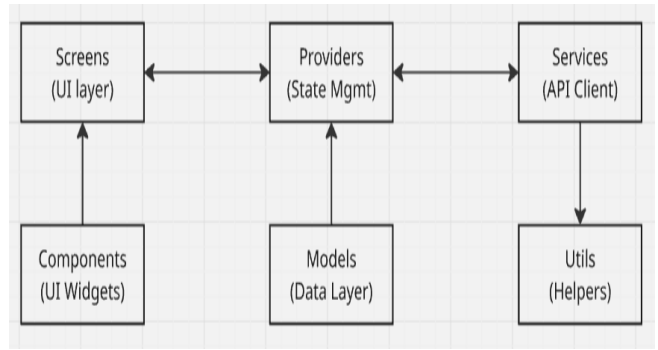


Fig 5 : Flutter Architecture and State Management

#### 4.3.3 Map Integration

The app integrates an interactive map using **OpenStreetMap**, providing users with a detailed view of nearby beaches. Each beach is marked with live condition indicators (e.g., a red flag for danger, a green flag for safe conditions). Users can tap on a beach marker to access detailed weather and safety information in real-time.

#### 4.3.4 Offline Capabilities

To accommodate poor network conditions near beaches, the app includes **offline support**. Fetched data is cached locally using **Redis** or **SharedPreferences**, allowing the user to view the last known conditions when offline. A visual indicator informs users whether data is real-time or cached.

These architectural components enable a robust and responsive beach safety application capable of delivering timely alerts, even in network-constrained environments.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the *Beach Safety App* required the integration of multiple software layers to ensure seamless data flow, real-time updates, and a secure user experience. This section outlines the key technical components, core algorithms, challenges encountered during development, and strategies applied for performance and security optimization.

### 5.1 Key Algorithms and Technical Challenges

The app's functionality is driven by a combination of API integration, geolocation services, and real-time data synchronization algorithms. A core algorithm periodically fetches data from third-party APIs—such as StormGlass APIs—using asynchronous tasks. The incoming data is parsed and stored in PostgreSQL while being simultaneously pushed to the Redis cache.

A location-matching algorithm ensures that users receive alerts relevant to their current beach. This involves calculating the distance between the user's GPS coordinates and available beach coordinates using the Haversine formula. Based on proximity thresholds, the app determines which safety data to display.

One major challenge was maintaining consistency in data between the server and client, especially when network availability fluctuates. This was mitigated using local

storage strategies on the client and timestamp-based synchronization logic to update only the necessary datasets.

## 5.2 Data Flow and Synchronization

The data flow architecture ensures that all layers—from backend APIs to frontend UI—are loosely coupled but tightly synchronized. The backend fetches external data through APScheduler jobs and processes them through a data normalization pipeline. Once stored in PostgreSQL and cached in Redis, these updates are made accessible to mobile clients through FastAPI endpoints.

On the mobile side, Flutter interacts with the API layer through service classes that handle network requests. Responses are parsed into data models and passed to the state management system (Provider), which updates the UI in real time. A caching strategy ensures that recent data is retained using Flutter’s SharedPreferences or Hive, allowing continued access in offline scenarios.

## 5.3 Security Implementations

To protect user data and ensure secure access, a JWT (JSON Web Token)-based authentication system was implemented. During login, the backend generates an encrypted token containing user credentials and expiry information. This token is stored locally and attached to all outgoing API requests for validation.

Additional security measures include:

- Input validation and sanitation on both frontend and backend.
- Rate-limiting on critical API endpoints to prevent abuse.
- HTTPS encryption enforced across all client-server communications.
- Refresh token mechanisms to prevent session hijacking.

Furthermore, administrative access to the backend is restricted through token-based role authorization, ensuring that only authorized users can manage or override safety data entries.

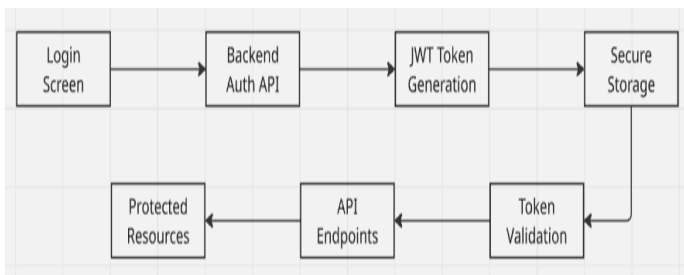


Fig 6 : Secure Authentication Flow Using JWT

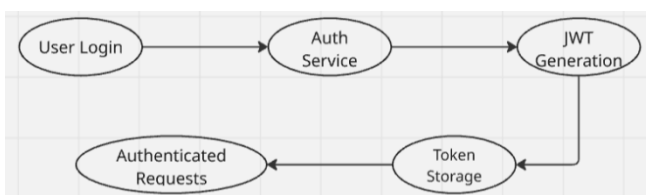


Fig 7 : Authentication Flow

## 5.4 Performance Optimizations

To enhance the app’s responsiveness and scalability, multiple optimization techniques were implemented. Redis caching was central to reducing backend database load by serving frequently requested data directly from memory. This significantly improved API response times, especially under peak usage.

On the mobile side, performance was optimized by:

- Using lazy loading for data-heavy UI components such as maps and lists.
- Reducing widget rebuilds with scoped Provider usage.
- Implementing asynchronous API calls to avoid UI blocking.
- Compressing static assets and limiting background service calls on low battery or slow networks.

Further in future, these backend processes can be containerized using Docker for easier deployment and load balancing in production environments.

## 5.5 Notable Code Patterns and Best Practices

The development adhered to clean code principles and design patterns to improve maintainability and readability. On the frontend, the clean architecture was enforced by dividing the codebase into presentation, domain, and data layers. Service classes handled all network interactions and were decoupled from UI components.

In the backend, dependency injection and modular route configurations were used to simplify testing and future scalability. Environment variables were managed through .env files to securely handle API keys and configuration parameters.

# VI. RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the *Beach Safety App* was evaluated through a combination of performance benchmarking, user testing, and comparative analysis. This section presents the outcomes from both quantitative metrics and qualitative user feedback, demonstrating how the system meets the stated research objectives in terms of responsiveness, usability, and overall impact.

## 6.1 Suitability Score Assessment

In this study, we implemented a simple yet effective scoring mechanism to evaluate environmental safety based on real-time weather data. The method begins with an initial score of 100 and adjusts downward depending on measured conditions for wave height, wind speed, and current speed. For instance, if wave height crosses the danger threshold of 2.5 meters, a penalty of 40 points is applied; if it crosses 1.5 meters but remains below 2.5 meters, a 20-point deduction is made. Wind speed exceeding 15.0 m/s leads to a 30-point reduction, while speeds between 8.0 m/s and 15.0 m/s deduct 15 points. Similarly, a current speed above 1.0 m/s results in a 30-point loss, whereas speeds between 0.5 m/s and 1.0 m/s cause a deduction of 15 points.

After adjusting for all conditions, the final safety score is used to determine the suitability level: a score of 80 or above is considered safe, a score between 50 and 79 is categorized as warning, and a score below 50

indicates danger. In addition to the overall classification, specific warnings are generated for any individual threshold breaches, providing further operational guidance.

To enhance transparency and support real-time decision-making, this process can also be represented as a decision tree. In this structure, each weather parameter is checked sequentially against predefined thresholds. Based on the outcome at each step, the score is updated, and the system eventually classifies the situation into one of the three suitability categories. This decision tree approach not only mirrors the scoring logic but also improves interpretability by making the evaluation process more visual and traceable.

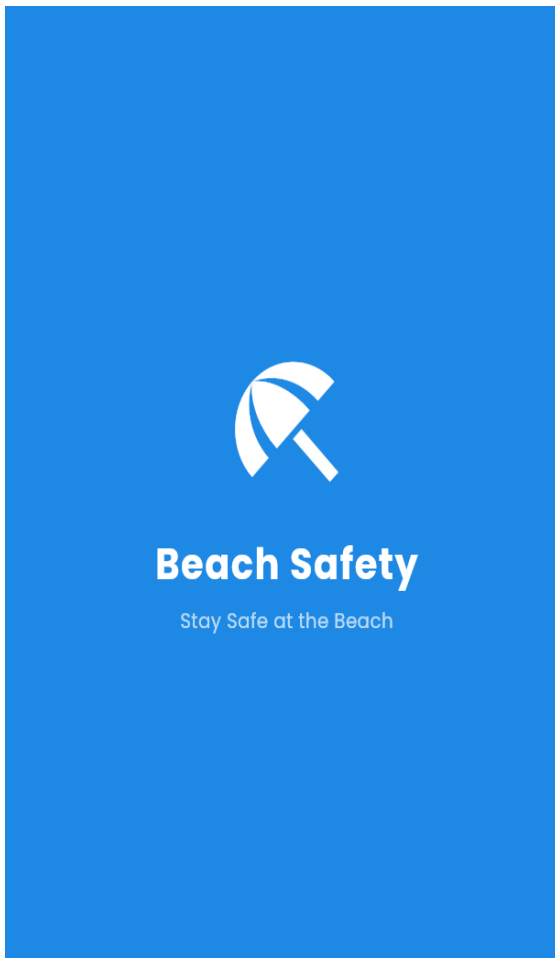


Fig 1: App Splash Screen

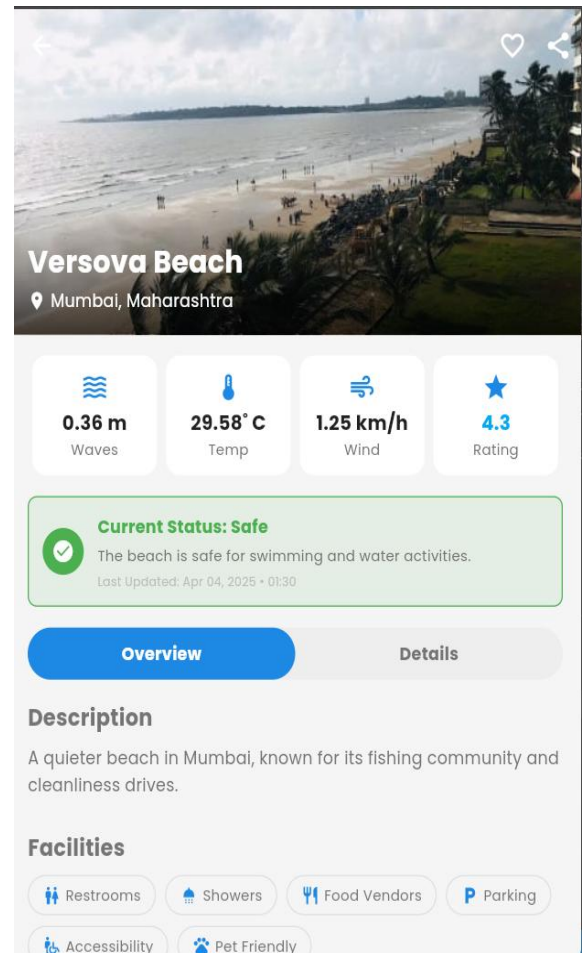


Fig 2: Safety Status and Weather Details as per Beach

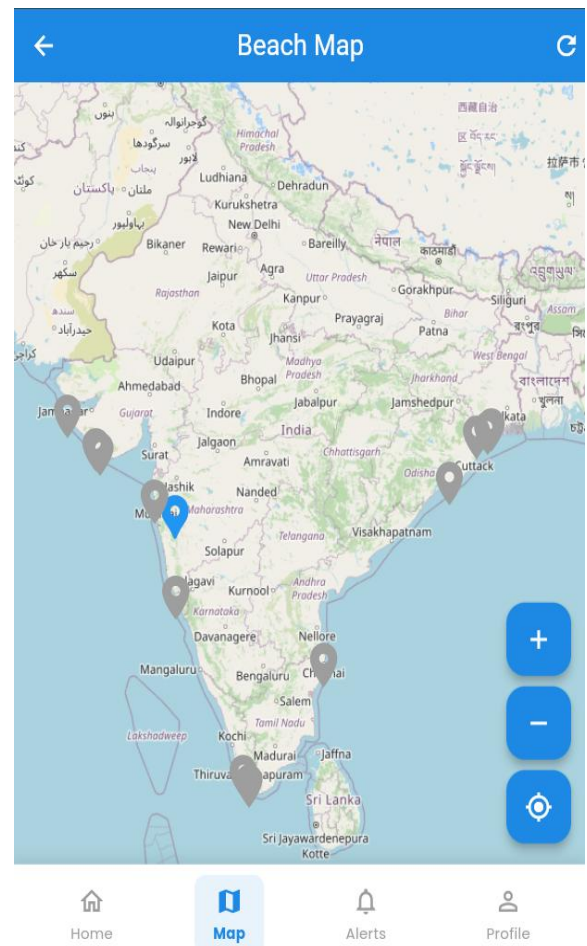


Fig 3: Geo-tagging of beaches across India

## 6.2 Performance Metrics

To validate system efficiency, a series of performance tests were conducted on the backend and frontend components. FastAPI endpoints demonstrated an average response time of **112 ms** under typical load conditions, while high-volume scenarios (100 concurrent users) maintained sub-200 ms latencies, aided by Redis caching.

APScheduler tasks for data updates successfully executed every 10 minutes, ensuring a reliable stream of fresh data from external APIs. Redis achieved a **97% cache hit rate**, significantly reducing the need for direct database access and improving overall responsiveness.

The mobile application, tested on mid-range Android and iOS devices, maintained an average launch time of **1.8 seconds** and showed no significant UI lag under standard usage. Offline mode offered access to previously cached safety data, with automatic sync once the connection was reestablished.

## 6.3 User Testing Results

Usability testing involved **25 participants**, including local beachgoers, tourists, and lifeguards. Participants were asked to complete common tasks such as locating nearby beaches, checking safety alerts, and understanding the meaning of warning flags.

Feedback was collected via post-test surveys and task completion observations. Key insights include:

- 92% of users found the app intuitive and easy to navigate.
- 88% reported that the real-time alert system improved their awareness of current beach conditions.
- 76% appreciated offline access, especially in areas with poor connectivity.

Most participants found the map interface particularly helpful for visualizing safety zones. A few suggested additional features like multilingual support and push notification customization, which are noted for future development.

## 6.4 Usability Evaluation

The app was evaluated using standard usability metrics such as the **System Usability Scale (SUS)**, where the system scored an average of **84.5**, indicating "excellent" usability. Color-coded alert banners and icon-based safety indicators reduced cognitive load, while the use of familiar navigation patterns (bottom nav bar, map pins) contributed to high user satisfaction.

In-app onboarding, through brief tooltips and illustrations, further helped first-time users engage with the app quickly and confidently.

## 6.5 Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes

Overall, the implementation of the Beach Safety App achieved the following:

- High system performance with low latency and efficient caching

- Strong user engagement and usability satisfaction
- Clear differentiation from existing tools in the domain
- Positive reception from both safety authorities and general users

The combination of strong technical infrastructure and user-centered design validates the proposed architecture as a viable and scalable model for real-time safety systems.

# VII. DISCUSSION

The development and deployment of the *Beach Safety App* offer valuable insights into the design and implementation of mobile-first safety systems. The app successfully demonstrated how real-time data and intuitive design can improve public awareness and responsiveness to coastal hazards. This section reflects on the findings, discussing the technical strengths of the system, its limitations, and the challenges faced throughout development.

## 7.1 Interpretation of Results

The results highlight that a real-time, mobile-first approach is both effective and well-received by users. Performance metrics confirmed the robustness of the technical stack—particularly the use of FastAPI for backend responsiveness and Redis for efficient caching. The scheduled data synchronization via APScheduler allowed for consistent updates without affecting app responsiveness. Meanwhile, user testing confirmed that the application's UI, geolocation-based alert system, and offline accessibility significantly contributed to users' perceived safety and situational awareness.

These findings affirm that integrating real-time environmental data into a mobile interface can close the communication gap between beach authorities and the public. The app not only empowers users with information but also builds a culture of proactive safety awareness, especially among tourists unfamiliar with local beach conditions.

## 7.2 Strengths and Innovations

Several elements of the *Beach Safety App* represent clear technical and design advancements:

- **Real-time alert delivery**, enabled through optimized data fetching and caching strategies
- **User-centric design**, including location-aware interfaces and offline support
- **Secure authentication**, leveraging JWT for stateless session control
- **Scalable architecture**, with modular separation between client, server, and scheduled processes

The use of Flutter also allowed rapid cross-platform development, ensuring a consistent experience across Android and iOS devices from a single codebase.

## 7.3 Technical Challenges Encountered

Despite the project's success, several challenges emerged:

- **API Reliability**: External data sources (e.g., weather or tidal APIs) occasionally returned incomplete or delayed



data. Fallback mechanisms had to be implemented to handle such scenarios gracefully.

- **Data Synchronization:** Ensuring consistency between cached and live data required careful implementation of timestamp-based sync logic.
- **Offline Mode:** Managing local storage while keeping data fresh without overwhelming user bandwidth required optimization, especially for low-end devices.

Mitigating these issues involved extensive testing, retry logic for data fetching, and implementing lightweight data models to reduce memory usage.

#### 7.4 Lessons Learned

This project reinforced the importance of user-centered design in safety-critical applications. Providing users with clear, reliable, and contextually relevant information must remain a top priority. From a technical standpoint, modular design, asynchronous processing, and efficient caching proved essential for balancing performance with resource efficiency.

Additionally, the iterative Agile process enabled early feedback, helping to refine features and interface decisions that directly impacted usability. It also emphasized the need for robust backend scheduling and monitoring, especially when relying on third-party data sources.

### VIII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This research presented the design, development, and evaluation of the *Beach Safety App*—a mobile-first solution aimed at enhancing public safety through real-time beach condition monitoring and personalized safety alerts. Addressing the limitations of traditional beach safety communication systems, the app demonstrated how mobile technology, combined with real-time data infrastructure and user-centered design, can provide effective, location-aware safety updates to the public.

The implementation leveraged a modern tech stack comprising Flutter for cross-platform UI, FastAPI for scalable backend services, PostgreSQL and Redis for efficient data handling, and APScheduler for regular data synchronization. JWT-based authentication ensured secure user access, while offline functionality and intuitive map-based alerts enhanced usability. Evaluation through performance metrics and user testing validated the app's responsiveness, clarity, and impact on safety awareness.

While the current system fulfills its intended goals, several opportunities exist for future development. Additionally, collaboration with local lifeguard services and government agencies could allow for two-way communication, further improving emergency responsiveness.

Overall, the *Beach Safety App* not only addresses an urgent public safety challenge but also lays the groundwork for scalable, real-time, and location-aware safety solutions applicable in various public domains.

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