

Driving Engagement via the Costa Coffee App

Delivering a speedy and seamless user experience to millions of Costa Coffee customers with its loyalty app.



"The relationship with Planit has grown from strength to strength. We don't just have a customer/consultant dynamic, but a true partnership which looks at ways to continually improve, such as our joint aspiration to automate our regression testing. We now have over 80% of our regression scripts automated, when two years ago we had none, and this has enabled us to go faster, do more, and bring value to the business quicker."

*Peter Harvey
IT Portfolio Lead – Digital,
Costa Coffee*

Problem

Since its introduction in March 2010, the "Coffee Club" loyalty program formed an important revenue stream for Costa Coffee. As the number of Coffee Club members continued to grow, the coffeehouse chain wanted to extend the benefits of the initiative to mobile device users.

In August 2014, Costa Coffee launched its Coffee Club app for iOS and Android. It allowed the millions of members of the Coffee Club loyalty program to log into their account, update details, check their point balance, and see what they can purchase with the points they earned.

The app served the Coffee Club loyalty program well for the next four years, with 1.3 million people downloading it in 2018. However, as other similar loyalty apps became more multi-functional over that time, Coffee Club's usability and functionality remained mostly unchanged.

With almost 83% of the United Kingdom's 67 million population owning a smartphone, Costa Coffee realised it needed a better app experience to keep growing Coffee Club membership. Therefore, it decided to replace the existing Coffee Club app with a newer and more modern experience in 2018.

To ensure that the new Coffee Club app worked well for users on launch, Costa Coffee knew that it would need to be thoroughly tested. In addition to ensuring all the existing and new functions worked as intended, the functionality of the new user interface and overall app performance would need to be quality assured.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- 1.5 million app downloads since re-launch
- 97% reduction in time taken in regression testing
- Test automation saving of £6,000 per release cycle
- 60% cost savings by integrating our offshore team
- 30% longer testing window made possible by offshoring

TECHNOLOGIES:

- Apple iOS
- Google Android
- Magento eCommerce Platform
- Datacash payment gateway
- Comarch loyalty management
- Whishworks for Mulesoft integration
- WRS Systems EPOS

DELIVERED:

- Mobile App Testing
- Functional Testing
- Performance Testing
- Test Automation
- Test Management
- Offshore Delivery
- Staff Augmentation

Costa Coffee understood that a full app redesign would be a significant undertaking by its development team. Since it did not have the staff capacity, capability, and technology required to fully test the app, it needed a reliable and trusted quality assurance partner to do it for them.

Solution

Costa Coffee approached Planit based on our existing relationship providing user interface, performance, and non-functional testing for its website. This way, our existing knowledge of its business processes and systems would be an asset carried over and built upon for the continuous delivery of the app. Thus, it was our experience in successfully delivering multi-functional apps, particularly in terms of their performance, that led to our involvement with the new Coffee Club app.

An ambitious timeline was set for the delivery of the new Coffee Club app. That meant our test strategy had to be both time efficient and cost effective.

As we had done with Costa Coffee's website, we provided cost effective, scalable, and flexible resourcing across the entire end-to-end testing. Since many of our local staff had at some point worked on one of their projects, they were often able to immediately contribute to the app without needing to be upskilled.

New functionality added to the Coffee Club app included the ability to:

- Receive emails and push messages as part of campaigns.
- Check point balance and transaction history.
- Locate stores.
- Order ahead and skip the queue in store.
- Collect points from Costa Express machines.
- Award consumers with vouchers and offers redeemable in store.
- Award consumers with gifts in the form of in-app games.
- Receive and redeem promotional vouchers and offers.
- Completely replace the physical loyalty card with the app.
- Order in-store using the app.
- Organise an order delivery using a delivery partner.

We carried out functional testing of these new features and the app's redesigned front-end on a wide variety of iOS and Android devices in our device farm. Compatibility of the app was also ensured so it would provide a consistent user experience across the two types of supported devices, as well as compared to the Costa Club desktop and mobile websites.

We also used this device farm to ensure that the same functionality from before continued to work well and was improved upon, such as the ability to:

“The testing experts from Planit quickly gain the respect for the roles they play and the value they bring to become well embedded in our projects. They are very flexible and are well equipped to deal with change as projects slow or go faster, and the commitment of both individuals and management to our success is a testament to the ethos of the company.”

Peter Harvey
IT Portfolio Lead – Digital,
Costa Coffee

- Log in with current account details, register an existing card, or set up a new account.
- Earn and track points balance from in-store and Costa Express machine purchases.
- Find directions, opening times, and facilities of the nearest stores.
- Add the Coffee Club card to Android Pay.

In addition to enhancing the functional and end-to-end testing at Costa Coffee, we also worked closely with business stakeholders to improve the financial and data extract reporting process. Our resources implemented an overall test approach for financial reports with a scalable process of engagement with the relevant stakeholder to ensure the business and test effort are relevant to the scope of changes and complexity of the project.

This ensures that the client has the confidence and understanding of the level of testing completed, and a defined process of engagement where business sign-off is also required. The process has been designed to work for all parties with requests for support are handled in a time efficient manner.

For the data extracts for the data warehouse, we increased the amount of testing alongside the level of detail to which this data is interrogated before business validation. This resulted in more defects being identified earlier in the release lifecycle, preventing these issues from being seen by stakeholders, therefore increasing their confidence in the product and speeding up business validation testing.

We also worked with multiple suppliers and the client to implement a sustainable process for the functional file validation, file loading, and business validation. All parties were engaged and agreed to the new process, which includes early access to data tables, allowing SQL sequences to be built and tested by the business ahead of the data itself being loaded, providing a walkthrough of changes and business-driven scenario creation.

These scenarios are transformed into test scripts, ensuring full traceability and reducing the ambiguity for the business as to what data they will see when validating the warehouse itself. The success of these measures has led to the in-progress initiative of rolling these processes out on all report testing to have one holistic approach agreed to by all for consistency in business engagement.

Performance testing was carried out to ensure that the new and existing features of the app worked and performed well under a variety of use cases and scenarios. This testing also extended to the back-end systems that integrated with the app, ensuring that Costa Coffee had the ability to upscale their environment when needed without having to worry about load spikes caused by campaigns or promotions.

To meet client demands for rapid delivery, we focused on speeding up testing. One way we achieved this was by using a combination of both onshore and offshore teams, extending the testing window by 30%.

We also accelerated delivery by leveraging the power of automation, which significantly sped up the delivery of regression testing. By running our automation suite before the start of each day or following each change, we were able to identify issues earlier and increase productivity.

ABOUT PLANIT:

At Planit, we are experts in quality engineering and assurance. With strong retail domain experience, our specialist consultants can help you deliver a seamless omni-channel experience and support the successful implementation and integration of your complex range of backend platforms.

Ask us how we can help you delight your customers and unlock more value from your systems!

Outcome

Our testing of the Coffee Club app met the ambitious launch window set by the company and went on to be quickly downloaded by 1.5 million satisfied Coffee Club members.

Our performance testing ensured that the Costa Club app was well positioned for high activity events, such as a three-day birthday promotion that achieved the following milestones:

- Over 650,000 new user registrations over three days. Typically, Costa Club has an average of 4,500 new registrations per day.
- The app became the most downloaded app on the Apple App Store and Google Play, beating popular apps at the time such as Whatsapp and NHS COVID-19.
- Sales through the app compared to in-store surpassed 50% for the first time.
- 1.8 million in-store transactions were made. The previous biggest promotion recorded 739,000 transactions.
- 60,000 collect transactions compared to the previous high of 31,000.
- 912,000 digital vouchers used.

In addition to the high quality of the app, Costa Coffee was particularly impressed with the results and value delivered by our offshore team. Not only did it provide its development team with a longer and more thorough testing window, it also enabled the coffeehouse chain to save 60% in testing costs.

Our test automation suite was designed so it could be re-used for regression testing, which enabled the app's current functions to be quickly and easily re-tested whenever it is updated without need for direct tester supervision. This enabled regression testing to go from eight days to 1.5 hours, a reduction of 97% that delivers savings of £6,000 per release cycle.

We continue to test the app for Costa Coffee with every update that is rolled out. During the outbreak of COVID-19, we helped to deliver crucial new functions designed to limit physical contact, such as enabling customers to do a contactless order from a Costa Express machine, or at their table in the cafe without having to go to the counter.

Costa Coffee has been so impressed by the time and cost savings of the automated regression suite that we are continually increasing its coverage of the app. We are now in the process of delivering test automation beyond the app itself to cover the coffeehouse chain's end-to-end business processes and POS system.