***Casual dining and coffee shops will see boost in 2014***

Casual dining outlets and coffee shops can look forward to a boost in 2014, according to Horizons1.

Consumers will regain confidence and increase their spending on eating and drinking out, which will boost growth in the sector compared to a “flat 2013”, said the foodservice specialist.

However, this increased consumer activity means chains and established brands will be forced to work harder and better to secure customers.

Spring 2014 will see the first signs of recovery, as consumer finances recover from the post-Christmas slump2 and the bad weather of January and February begins to abate3. If this bears true, operators can look forward to improved sales.

Sites whose average spends per visit hover4 at the £10-20 mark will see the most improvement – as will take away and drink-in coffee venues as consumers look to “treat themselves,” Horizons said.

This means big coffee chains and casual dining sites will also be forced to re-examine their food and drink offer as they saturate the high-street, face higher rents, and see increased competition from artisanal brands.

Horizons’ managing director Peter Backman said: “We predicted that UK foodservice would remain fairly flat during 2013, and so it was. However the year ahead will be an interesting one. Some recovery in sales is likely, but consumers are now constantly seeking value-for-money, good quality food and high service levels.

“This means that those operators who don’t match up will be abandoned in favour of outlets that do. We are now dealing with a much tougher, more discerning customer.”

He added: “We could see something of a price war as the big three [Costa, Caffe Nero and Starbucks] start to compete head-on by offering increasingly cheaper cups of coffee.”

by Hannah Thompson, *CATERER & HOTELKEEPER,* Friday 3rd January 2014

1Horizons: institut de sondage spécialisé dans les métiers de la bouche

2slump: choc

3abate: s’éloigner

4hover: avoisine

5tougher: plus difficile