

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Online Display in Wales: Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion overview

On the whole consumers are quite confident navigating the landscape (selecting restaurants and takeaways) and there is no real unmet need for help with selection. On balance, consumers are not demanding additional help, and are currently making do with a range of different criteria (including reviews; WOM) to help inform choices and decisions.

That said, the information available to help inform their decisions is haphazard, vague and difficult to verify. Information about hygiene is not understood to be readily available, and consumers often either aren't aware of the ability to look up FHRS ratings online, or don't consider seeking it out. FHRS information is regarded as credible, independent and verifiable giving it a 'legitimacy' that reviews and recommendations do not. If well executed, FHRS online display would be a useful addition to consumers' repertoire of key information.

5.2 Research objectives

What follows is a summary of answers to the specific research questions listed above.

How and where should the ratings information be signposted to maximise customer awareness and use?

It is critical to consumers that FHRS information be clearly displayed. Consumers wanted FHRS ratings displayed in a prominent place on the FBO websites.

What drives consumer reactions and preferences?

As consumers are already navigating an inconsistent landscape it is critical that information is delivered overtly and clearly so that it can be easily seen and understood.

How high is the risk of misunderstandings or other barriers arising?

On this evidence, there is little risk that consumers will misunderstand food hygiene ratings online. Barriers to use (and confidence in the system) could happen if consumers feel FBOs are able to hide or fake ratings.

What strategies might help to prevent confusion and maximise accessibility?

To maximise impact, FHRS ratings should:

- Be displayed prominently
- Not require consumers navigate through websites or external links
- Not be hidden in small print

What are the best means of presenting the ratings so that consumers can easily access meaningful information that empowers them to make informed choices?

As well prominently displaying FHRS ratings, consumers are requiring that the embedded images of the rating contain a link to the specific listing on the FSA