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# Teens, Food Choice, and Health: How Can a Multi-Method Research Methodology Enhance the Study of Teen Food Choice and Health Messaging?

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This research report compares alternative approaches to analyzing the complex factors that influence teenagers' food choice. Specifically, a multi-method approach—which involves the integration of the qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, data, and analysis—is compared to a single methodological approach, which involves use of either a quantitative or qualitative methodology.

## Methods

A quantitative-only, a qualitative-only, and a multi-method approach were each applied to the 2006–2009 teen-targeted milk promotion campaign of the British Columbia Dairy Foundation (BCDF). The quantitative approach examines the association between teenager-targeted health message events and healthy food consumption by analyzing longitudinal data in an event impact framework. The qualitative approach explores teens' views of additional healthy foods (e.g., whole grains, fruit, and vegetables) and messaging influences via a series of focus groups with teenagers. The multi-method approach requires that the two methodologies be integrated in some manner. The approach used in this case study involves a two-stage explanatory multi-method design where quantitative results are generated first and these results are further explained in the qualitative phase of the research.

## Results

Results provided by the quantitative approach includes measurement of the strength of relationships between the dependent variable, which is the quantity of fluid milk purchased by households with teenagers in the home, and the explanatory variables, which include income, family size, education, number of siblings, province, substitute beverage purchases, fluid-milk price level, substitute beverage promotion events (current and lagged), and BCDF promotion event (current and lagged), for the regression equation.

Results provided by the qualitative approach include insight into teenagers' views on healthy food promotions and impact, importance of the message source, and milk versus other healthy foods.

Results from the application of the multi-method approach include each of the single approaches results noted above plus further explanation of the quantitative results gained through the two-stage approach, increased quality of evidence and strength of claims, utilization of both the inductive and deductive research cycles, and outcomes that are both generalizable and context-specific. These results all serve to improve the researchers' ability to address the complex and multi-faceted influences of teenagers' food choices and make multi-methods a key choice of methodology for this area of research.