# 1.0- Braintree Recreation COI Primary Research Methodology

This methodology will outline the reasons and supporting literature the organisation will follow to conduct the primary research to be undertaken. This will also include sampling strategies which will be implemented as well as some of the ethical issues surrounding the conducting of research in this manner.

## 1.1 - Stages of research

The different stages of research can be split into five basic parts shown below in figure 1.1:

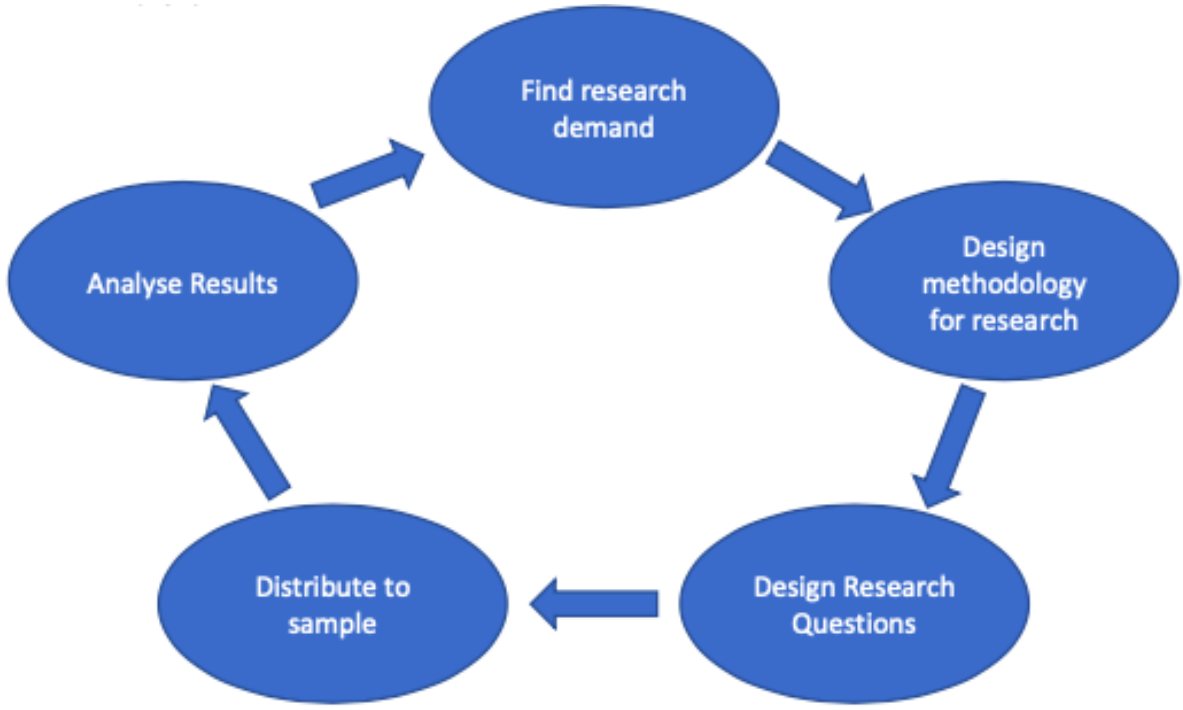


**Figure 1.1** – Research Stages flow diagram

Finding a demand in research could be from a gap in secondary research available to the organisation, or demand could be there as there is no research available at all. In the case of Braintree Recreation CIO, it's the latter. The demand for this research is there in order for the CIO to move forward in creating a medium to long term plan by using it as a foundation to indicate what the public would like to see on the recreation ground. Designing a research methodology is important to understand which approach, method and delivery to conduct as well as the ethical issues associated with these. By looking at the different research methods and the demand for this research in conjunction with ways funding can be obtained, the research questions can be designed. Once these questions are designed and tested, they will be distributed to the chosen sample via the chosen platform, which will be

decided in later sections of this methodology. Once the desired number of respondents have been reached, the data can be analysed, fulfilling the demand for this research. This research may not be conclusive or may need further study to be carried out, in which case the stages of research will start again.

## 1.2 – Research Approach

Research by Bryman (2008) categorised the approached of researching into two different assemblages, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research is described as the collection of raw numerical, statistical and mathematical data through means such as surveys, questionnaires and polls. Curtis and Drennan (2013) discuss the advantages of quantitative methods, which include the ability to get a large response rate, therefore more accurate statistical data to process. They also describe the data as not being as biased as a qualitative method as it is representative of many different views. A significant advantage of quantitative data is the way it can be used to test against a hypotheses'. One theoretical example for the CIO would be testing the usage of the recreation ground from those of differing social, economic and physical backgrounds. The ability to quantify this data will make the analysis a lot more conclusive with the reduced threat of bias. On the other hand, Creswell (2009) outlines how quantitative research needs a large number of responses for the results to be accurate, in fact, the larger the response rate, the better. Obviously, financial or reward based incentives for respondents would be the best way to guarantee a large number of responses but at a very high cost. In contrast, CIO hopes the future of the recreation ground is of such high public importance, this will be a close second to any possible rewards offered, at zero cost.

Qualitative research is a good way of getting a target individual/small group of people's perceptions or observe them to figure out more information on chosen subject or issue, for example interviews or focus groups (Flick, 2007). Qualitative research methods are good as they can give rather in-depth information on a particular subject. Furthermore, when it comes to interviews, an interviewer is not constricted to a single set of questions, therefore can induce a branch-off question for more in depth understanding, something hard to do in quantitative research methods such as questionnaires (King and Horrocks, 2010). In contrast, King and Horrocks (2010) explain how the researcher will have an already built in bias which can influence the answer to the question in an interview. The last thing the CIO would want to do is influence a respondent during an interview therefore questions would have to be carefully constructed to avoid this. In addition to a bias, there may also be ethical issued such as confidentially associated with this method of research therefore I would not reflect an accurate conclusion of the subject at hand. The main constriction of this research method is the resources it takes to conduct it. Processes such as observations and interviews require a lot of time, not only during the research but also the analysis stage as well as the results from the quantitative research results are also a lot harder to visually present (Silverman, 2000).

Another set of approaches similar to quantitative and qualitative research, is the positivism and Interpretivism approaches. Walliman (2011) likens positivism to a scientific quantitative approach whereas interpretivism being likened to a humanistic qualitative approach. "*The*

*positivist approach to scientific investigation is based on acceptance as fact that the world around us is real, and that we can find out about these realities*" (Walliman, 2011, p.21). This scientific approach will suit the realities the CIO is asking and therefore would be the suitable choice as a research approach. On the other hand, Interpretivism is described as *"...the view of the world that we see around us is the creation of the mind. This does not mean the world is not real, but rather that we can only experience it personally through our perceptions which are influenced by our preconceptions, beliefs and values; we are not neutral, disembodied observers but part of society*" (Walliman, 2011, p.22). This approach may possibly cause a researcher, already familiar with the subject area from previous experience, to confirm or deny their already predetermined bias rather than learning a collective law.

Therefore, the approach this research project has taken is the quantitative and positivism one. One main justification for this approach is the large target sample audience which will need to be collected for an accurate reflection of the views of the whole of the local area. A qualitative approach simply would not have provided an improved result compared to the quantitative approach, although it may be considered when consulting the current main users of the grounds (the 3 sports clubs). Furthermore, the quantitative approach will allow there to be a visual presentation of the results in a statistical form, therefore enabling a possible clear conclusion to be conducted. Moreover, the use of quantitative research methods means they can be conducted in full confidentiality as well as the elimination of innate bias as seen with some qualitative research approaches.

## 1.3 – Research Method

There are several different quantitative approach methods which are outlined by Bryman (2008), the two main ones being questionnaire surveys and polls. The research conducted by Braintree Recreation CIO will be in the form of a questionnaire survey. There were many reasons for this decision. The large scope of a possible sample, the whole of Braintree, means this research method would be perfectly suited for a large quantity of responses. The platform which will be used to create this questionnaire will be free, Google forms, but other platforms were also available for free and at a price, all gaining the same results. This will benefit the research as the lower the cost, the more efficient it will become. In addition to this, the results will be mainly in statistical form therefore a conclusion can be easily presented, furthermore, on a positivism theory approach, it can create new theories and results for possible further research work.

## 1.4 – Sampling Strategies

With the research method of a quantitative questionnaire, Kalton (1983) indicated three main sampling techniques which can be adopted for impartial results, these are random sampling, systematic sampling and stratified sampling. Random sampling is where every member of a target population has the same chance of being picked, this is beneficial in a large target population as other methods may take more time with little end difference in results. On the down side, this method can increase bias if the random samples' chosen to have the same view, although this is not intentional.

Stratified sampling is a process whereby a researcher identifies a stratum and their actual representation within a general population, then random sampling is completed to reach an appropriate number of respondents per stratum, enough to represent to population sufficiently (Kalton, 1983). A stratum in this case is a division in a community which have something in common with each other, for example, male and female. The advantages of this method are it reduces the sampling error involved compared to straight random sampling as well as being able to represent a population on proportionate groups (Lohr, 1999). This strategy would be hard to be tested in this research. Systematic sampling is a method whereby the sample size has already been decided, every x number is selected from a predetermined list of the sample population. This method is a lot simpler and efficient than the random sampling method as there is a more methodical approach to the sampling. On the other hand, this method requires a list of the population, something of which is not available to this research, therefore will not be used (Kalton, 1983).

Thompson (2012) emphasises how the larger the sample size, the more accurate the estimates of conclusions which can be made, a view also supported by Beaulieu (2012). In addition to this, it was noted that in order to assess the sample size, two factors should also be taken into account, these are confidence intervals and confidence levels. Confidence intervals are also known as the margin of error and this is the error of deviation between of the responses of the samples, and the responses of the whole population. This error figure is usually set at 5% meaning +/- 5% of the total responses may not accurately represent the total population (Lohr, 1999). Confidence levels are the margin of error which represent the truthfulness of a populations answers, for this research project it will be set at 99%. This means that 99% of the sample population will be considered truthful in their answers. The reason for this 1% uncertainty is a standard figure for the population (Beaulieu, 2012). Although the CIO agrees that these figures are unlikely to alter any conclusive results, it's always good to raise awareness of the theory behind this research.

The estimated recorded population of the Braintree district in 2019 is 152,604 (ONS, 2020) so our target for the questionnaire would aim to reach 1% of the population, around 1500 people. As this figure is fairly high a more reasonable response target will be in place. By using a ½ mile radius of the grounds, there are approximately 600 residences, therefore a target of 600 would be a realistic response sample size. In order to complete this, the questionnaire will initially be available for 1 month, and after 2 weeks of

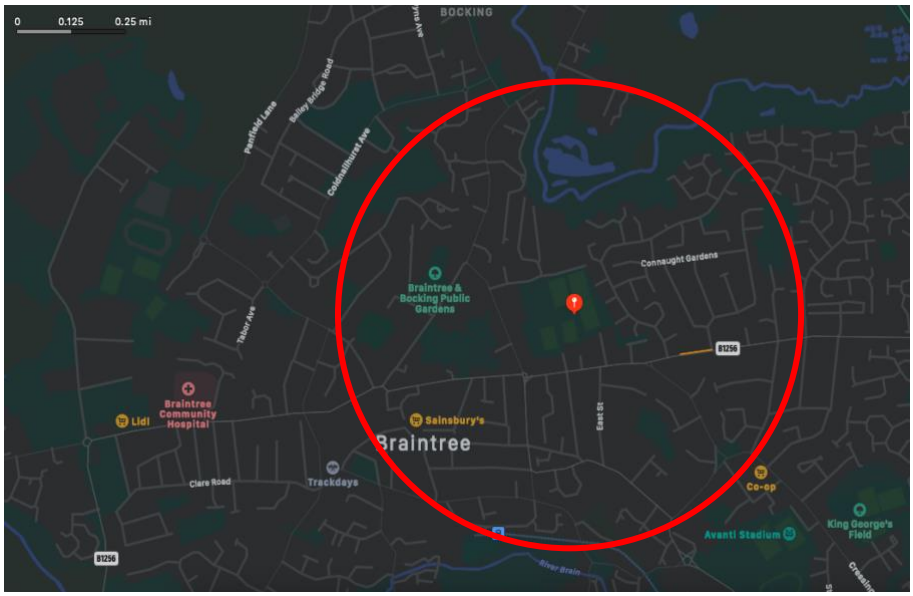


**Figure 1.4** – 0.5mi radius of the recreation ground.

the survey being active, this strategy will be reassessed and if further outreach will be needed, it will be acted on. It should be noted, Figure 1.4 is for theoretical response targets only, the target audience of the survey is the whole of Braintree, as is the audience of who the CIO wants to be able to use the grounds.

## 1.5 – Research Setting

The setting for this research refers to the place where it will be distributed as well as the timing of it.

There are many different methods of distributing a questionnaire and many have advantages and disadvantages. In an ideal perfect world situation, the researcher would go around to every house in the Braintree area and ask every person at these properties the questions on this questionnaire. Due to time, money and personnel available, this situation would simply be impossible to achieve and therefore a better and more efficient solution will be adapted. Another person-to-person research collection situation whereby the researcher would stand in a populated area and ask random subjects could have been adopted. This method could be a viable solution if stood on the recreation ground and ask users of the grounds, but would take time and under current government guidelines due to COVID-19, would be illegal. But when the restrictions are lifted, this will certainly be adopted in the future. On the other hand, a downside of this method is getting respondents to spend the short time answering the questions in case they are in a rush. An alternative cost restricted but possible efficient method would be to send out the questionnaire by post to each of the local houses of Braintree. This once again would incur a large postage and resource cost as well as the time taken to find the addresses of every house in the surrounding area therefore this method will not be adopted.

Recently, digital methods are commonly used for many types of research. The UK Office of National Statistics report 82% of adults, 41.8 million people, use the internet on a daily basis (Office for National Statistics, 2016) which for purposes of research and large audiences, was very appealing. In terms of digital and online research, there would be two viable options for distribution, these are email and social media. On an internet activities survey issued in 2016, the most common (76%) activity for adults to do was send/receive emails compared to 63% for social networking (Office for National Statistics, 2016). In terms of distributing the questionnaire by email, it will be a free, swift and efficient method with one major obstacle, getting the email addresses of the whole population in the first place. This restriction leaves only one credible option for digital distribution and this is social media. In the UK, 38 million people use social media actively and a further 50% of the population use their mobile phones to access it (Think digital First, 2017). Facebook has 1.23 billion daily users (Facebook, 2016). The social network platforms are the most suitable for a questionnaire to be released and with their large amount of users, it would be an ideal location for distributing the questionnaire with the view of getting a large response. Another advantage of using social media for getting respondents is it will be free, it will have a large scope for respondents as well as being quick and efficient to post and analyse the data.

Using the social media approach to distribute the questionnaire can be very selective, especially in terms of when people use it, therefore posting the questionnaire at the correct

time and day is essential to get the largest number of respondents. Fast Company (2014) note that the best time to post would be between 13:00 and 16:00. This timing it so people may click on it during a lunch break or so that it appears on their feed for when most people return home from work, around 5pm. They also note that the best day is a Wednesday. Therefore, the setting in which this questionnaire will be released is on the relevant social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, on a Wednesday between 1pm and 4pm. A pilot questionnaire will be issued to 5 test subjects. They will willingly participate and provided suitable feedback which will make sure the questionnaire was working up to standard.

## 1.6 – Ethical Concerns

Ethical issues surrounded the conducting of this primary research which took place and all such issues were mitigated to an as full extent as possible. Hardwick and Worsley (2011) outlined four ethical principles researchers must consider, these are autonomy, nonmalefiecence, justice and beneficence. Autonomy is the aspect of research where there must be no controlling influence over the results. This will be combatted by asking survey questions on a neutral basis as well as accompanying options for answers which did not influence the sample's result. Showing no bias was also a factor when deciding the research approach, whereby a qualitative method such as an interview would naturally produce a controlling influence. Nonmalefiecence was described as the feature of research ethics where it is imperative the researcher must not do any harm or distress to the subject either physically or mentally. Although the research method chosen means it would be nearly impossible for physical harm to come to the subject, mental harm may possible be a factor. This was mitigated by not asking any personally revealing questions which people may be sensitive about, on example being how much does the subject earn per year. This may be a sensitive subject to a person and therefore in order to remove any possibility of mental harm, all questions were relevant to the subject area as well as worded in a way which wouldn't breach those sensitive areas. Justice included the fairness of the research undertrained and how it must be just for the researchers, subject as well as the wider community. This will be achieved by the showing no bias regarding the recreation ground to the local community, consequently remaining neutral. Beneficence was portrayed as the research benefiting everyone involved as well as people who may be effected. In addition to this, Wiggins and Stevens (2016) drew attention to two more issues surrounding potential ethical issues, age and respondent confidentiality. In regards to age, they outlined how questions should be worded and asked with sensitivity, especially for the under 18 (children) age groups. For the questions asked in this questionnaire, there will be an insignificant chance of any ethical issues arising due to age, as the questions asked were not personal as well as the target sample being an older age group. Confidentiality was a present ethical issue which was combatted by not collecting any names or detailed personal information similar to names as well as not publishing any personal information relating to a participant unless the participant agrees to it.

## 1.7 – Conclusion

The Braintree Recreation CIO hopes this research methodology provides a fully transparent look into the reasoning behind the methods chosen in this primary research. The quantitative and positivism approach will be constructed in the form of a questionnaire distributed on social media. Our target sample will be the whole of Braintree, but a realistic target of 600 people will satisfy the goals of this research. This questionnaire will be issued for a period of one month, with a two week review period where methods such as face to face questionnaires (with social distancing in place) on the recreation ground itself will be considered. Once the results of this questionnaire are gathered, analysis it will take place and a subsequent full report will be relayed to the CIO and in particular the working group, and a condensed report with key points and outcome's from this research will be made available on the Braintree Recreation CIO's website.

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