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Short-Term Accommodations and Long-Term Housing Challenges in the Margaret River Tourist Destination: A Perspective of Population Movement and Pricing

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate the impact of short-stay accommodation (SSA) on housing dynamics, community welfare, and economic development in the Margaret River regional area. Grounded in an exploratory research paradigm, qualitative methods were used to gather insights from key stakeholders such as property owners, realtors, and council officials. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants with diverse experiences and perspectives on SSA. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, totaling 21 interview sessions spanning almost 600 min, to capture in-depth and nuanced perspectives on SSA's impact and regulatory landscape. Thematic analysis of the interview data, which was divided into two segments, revealed significant concerns regarding housing affordability, community well-being, and regulatory effectiveness. Additionally, the study uncovered a complex relationship between SSA and population dynamics, highlighting implications for the local housing infrastructure and market stability. The findings underscore the urgency of collaborative policy interventions to address the housing crisis and mitigate the adverse effects of SSA on local communities. Policymakers and stakeholders can utilize these insights to develop holistic strategies that prioritize equity, inclusivity, and shared prosperity in shaping the future of housing in regional areas such as Margaret River. This study contributes original insights by providing a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted implications of SSA on housing dynamics and community welfare in a regional context. By using qualitative methods and engaging key stakeholders, the research offers unique perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with the proliferation of SSA, thereby advancing scholarly discourse, and informing evidence-based policymaking in the field of housing studies.

Keywords: short-stay accommodation; housing availability and affordability; price dynamics; population growth; COVID-19



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1. Introduction

The Margaret River region, renowned for its natural beauty and vibrant tourism industry, grapples with a pressing housing crisis exacerbated by the proliferation of short-term accommodation. This study delved into the intricate dynamics of the housing market in Margaret River, aiming to shed light on the challenges posed by short-stay rentals, pricing dynamics, and their implications for the local community. Previous studies have highlighted the detrimental effects of short-stay accommodation on housing markets worldwide. [Barron et al. \(2018\)](#) demonstrated how the rise of platforms such as Airbnb can lead to increased rental prices and decreased availability of long-term rentals. Building on this research, our study aimed to delve deeper into the specific impacts of short-stay rentals on the Margaret River region, considering its distinct characteristics and challenges.

The relationship between the pricing of short-stay accommodation and the housing crisis involves a complex web of factors that require careful examination. The increase in

short-stay options, the conversion of longer-stay properties, eviction rates, rising property prices, and affordability issues contribute to a challenging scenario. Local housing markets often face escalating costs due to the impacts of global tourism and rising long-term rental rates, rendering single-income individuals unable to afford housing. Housing availability is constrained by geographical factors, environmental considerations, and zoning regulations (Ndaguba and Van Zyl 2023a). Economic conditions, population growth, and government policies also influence the supply and demand of housing (Brown et al. 2021). Margaret River's allure stems from its community spirit and natural attractions, but the limited housing availability creates a backlog of demand (Ndaguba and Van Zyl 2023b).

Simultaneously, the growth of platforms such as Airbnb has coincided with rising long-stay prices, exacerbating housing inflation, which has the potential to increase homelessness (Eijseberg 2022; Barker 2020; Grant 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, government lockdowns led to a huge migration from Perth to Margaret River, intensifying the scarcity of housing (Pforr et al. 2022), thus, boosting demand for short-stay accommodation and aggravating overcrowding (Mangan and Hyman 2021). The studies by Smith et al. (2024) and Ndaguba et al. (2024) showed that price moderates the short-stay to long-stay conversion relationship, and both price moderation and the conversion rate have implications for eviction rates and mental health. Because short-stay price hikes drive the conversion of property, hindering lower-income families from accessing housing, this has contributed to mental health issues in the region (Ndaguba et al. 2024; Bekkerman et al. 2023). Considering these complexities, businesses must analyze various factors to make informed decisions. However, governmental intervention is crucial to address the challenges posed by the short-stay sector, including housing crises, sustainability concerns, and social inequalities, to ensure a balanced sharing economy. In the short-term, this study intended to demonstrate the following.

- How do short-term accommodation and pricing dynamics impact the availability and affordability of housing in the Margaret River region? By examining this question, we aimed to provide insights into the root causes of the housing crisis and propose strategies for sustainable solutions.

2. Literature Review

The section reviewed discussions pertaining to the housing crisis, social disruption, the sharing economy, and local development with reference to short-term rental properties.

2.1. The Housing Crisis and Short-Stay Accommodation

The rapid expansion of short-stay accommodation, facilitated by platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO, has exacerbated the housing crisis in numerous cities worldwide (Ndaguba and Van Zyl 2023b; Zhang et al. 2020). This surge has led to the conversion of long-term rental properties into short-stay accommodation, resulting in a dwindling supply of affordable housing options for residents (Barron et al. 2018). Research has indicated a significant impact on housing prices, particularly in high-demand areas such as Barcelona, Berlin, and New York City, where short-stay accommodation has driven up costs (Zhang et al. 2020). Moreover, the social repercussions are profound, with the displacement of long-term residents and the erosion of community cohesion being notable consequences (Ndaguba 2024). Recent studies have shed light on these dynamics, emphasizing the need for effective regulatory measures and innovative policy interventions to address the housing crisis fueled by short-stay accommodation (Barron et al. 2018; Ndaguba et al. 2024; Shabrina et al. 2021; Garay-Tamajón et al. 2022). However, while these findings offer valuable insights, further research is warranted to explore sustainable solutions and mitigate the adverse effects on the affordability of housing and community well-being. Thus, the discourse on the housing crisis and short-stay accommodation remains pertinent and requires ongoing examination to inform policy decisions and safeguard the accessibility of housing for all residents.

The ramifications of short-stay accommodation on the housing crisis transcend mere availability and affordability, delving into intricate social and neighborhood dynamics. This phenomenon engenders a milieu of consequences, ranging from the erosion of community cohesion to the metamorphosis of the neighborhood's character (O'Regan 2017). The displacement of longstanding residents, catalyzed by soaring housing costs and diminished availability, disrupts entrenched social fabrics and precipitates a decline in the community's heterogeneity (Cocola-Gant and Gago 2021). Recent scholarly inquiries by Barron et al. (2019) and Ndaguba et al. (2024) elucidated the intricate interplay of short-stay accommodation on the dynamics of the long-term rental market, which is especially pertinent in locales such as Margaret River. Moreover, the research conducted by Shabrina et al. (2021) and Garay-Tamajón et al. (2022) underscored the deleterious repercussions of transitioning properties from long-term rentals to short-term accommodation, exacerbating housing shortages and conundrums of affordability. These inquiries have accentuated the imperative of scrutinizing the evolving tenor of rental strategies and their ramifications for housing markets. Collectively, the proliferation of short-stay accommodation compounds the housing crisis by constricting the availability of housing, precipitating price inflation and fomenting social discord. These exigencies underscore the necessity for policymakers to meticulously craft regulations and policies that reconcile the expansion of short-stay accommodation with imperatives for the accessibility and affordability of housing for residents.

2.2. Social Disruption and Neighborhood Effects

The rampant surge of short-term lodgings (Oszkay 2024), as underscored by Gurran and Phibbs (2017), sets off intricate social and communal ripple effects, posing a labyrinthine challenge to the cohesion and texture of neighborhoods (Ntege and Mukuna 2023; Galster 2024). The infusion of transient travelers often blurs the connective tissues of communities and saps the rootedness of longstanding inhabitants (Bao and Shah 2020). Furthermore, the metamorphosis of residential premises into transient abodes can precipitate seismic shifts in the composition and demeanor of neighborhoods, potentially adding to friction between inhabitants and visitors (Gurran and Phibbs 2017). This ousting of entrenched residents owing to the escalating cost of housing and the shrinking stockpile of accommodation disrupts age-old social webs and jeopardizes the tapestry of the community's diversity (Gold 2019). The ensuing housing imbroglio may fuel societal disarray, heralding a slew of unfavorable outcomes such as surging crime rates, deepening poverty, swelling homelessness, curtailed mobility, compromised psychological well-being, and social isolation (Bursik 1998). The amalgamation of the doctrine of neighborhood effects and social disruption theory, elucidated by Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) and Wilson (1987), respectively, has furnished a comprehensive matrix for dissecting the interplay between the neighborhood milieu, social upheaval, and their ramifications for individuals and collectives. This amalgamated approach underscores the compelling need to address precinct-level variables and societal disarray to nurture communal welfare and alleviate disparities. Concurrently, recent studies by Barron et al. (2018) underscored the concepts of "touristification" and "tourismphobia", illuminating how short-term accommodation can transmute neighborhoods into tourist enclaves or incite anti-tourism animosity among communities. The housing shortage in Margaret River, buffeted by a panoply of influences, including short-term accommodation, regulatory edicts, and demographic dynamics, highlights the exigency for nuanced policy solutions. Government missives from AHURI and the Grattan Institute have offered sagacious insights, yet hurdles endure in effectively enforcing statutes and blunting the impact of transient rentals, compounded by staffing scarcities. Academic treatises, buttressed by empirical forays, serve as a fulcrum for apprehending the intricate dynamics sculpting the affordability and availability of housing. By amalgamating extant treatises and discerning the cardinal findings, this critique paves the way for further dialogue on prospective panaceas and policy implications.

To summarize the literature review section, the housing crisis and short-stay accommodation research has underscored the growing concerns surrounding the proliferation of platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO and their impact on the availability and affordability of housing (Barron et al. 2018; Lee 2016). Existing studies have shed light on the conversion of long-term rental properties into short-stay accommodation and the consequent reduction in available housing units (Hoffman and Heisler 2020), also showing that the housing available for long-term stays are predominantly seeking short-stay prices. Research has indicated a notable increase in housing prices attributed to the expansion of short-stay accommodation, particularly evident in cities such as Barcelona, Berlin, and New York City (Barron et al. 2018; Zhang et al. 2020). Moreover, the literature has emphasized the broader socioeconomic repercussions, including the displacement of long-term residents and the loss of community cohesion (Zhang et al. 2020). Recent studies by Barron et al. (2019) and Ndaguba and Van Zyl (2023b) have provided valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of the availability and pricing of rentals, particularly in regions akin to Margaret River. However, a critical examination revealed notable gaps in the literature concerning the effectiveness of regulatory measures, and global trends of laws of prohibition rather than limitation. While limitation inclines towards a reduction in the number of days for rentals, prohibition seeks a complete ban on Airbnb. The third dimension, namely *laissez-faires* regulation, in most cases, is not considered to be a regulation because it is simply allowing market forces to determine its operability with government interventions. Each has its consequences, but, more importantly, regions must determine what is best for their region, and no region should impose a global trend, either prohibition or limitation, without recourse to its market, geographical setting, and topography, among other elements involving the living standard of its people. Moreover, the long-term sustainability of housing markets in the face of the growth of short-stay accommodation is hardly unknown. Fundamentally, this study dwelt on how short-term accommodation and pricing dynamics impact the availability and affordability of housing in the Margaret River region

Additionally, in the discussion on social disruption and neighborhood effects, the literature highlighted the multifaceted impact of short-stay accommodation on community cohesion and the neighborhood's character. While existing studies have elucidated the social disorganization resulting from the influx of transient visitors and the conversion of residential properties (Gurran and Phibbs 2017), further analysis revealed the need for a comprehensive framework. Integrating theories of neighborhood effects and social disruption provides a holistic perspective on the interplay between housing dynamics and community well-being (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000; Shaw and McKay 1942; Zhang et al. 2020). However, gaps persist in understanding the long-term implications of "touristification" and "tourismphobia" on neighborhood identity and social cohesion. This study aimed to bridge these gaps by examining the nuanced relationship between short-stay accommodation and the community's resilience, offering insights into effective policy interventions and strategies of community development. Overall, while the existing literature provides valuable insights into the challenges posed by short-stay accommodation, there remains a need for further research to address the gaps in understanding the regulatory landscape, socioeconomic implications, and long-term sustainability of housing markets. This study sought to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by offering a critical analysis of short-stay accommodation's impact on housing dynamics in regions such as Margaret River. By synthesizing key findings and identifying areas for future research, this literature review sets the stage for a comprehensive examination of the complex interplay between short-stay accommodation and community well-being.

3. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this study was to comprehensively explore the intricate interplay among tourism, realization, and social issues, aiming to offer insights for stakeholders and policymakers in the tourism, hospitality, and housing sectors. Using a qualitative approach, this research delved into the phenomenon, investigating key indicators from

the participants' viewpoints (Ganguli and Ebrahim 2017). Rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, the study embraced an ontology that recognizes the socially constructed nature of truth (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Momeni et al. (2018) outlined three primary data collection options within the interpretivist paradigm: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured methods. Given the exploratory nature, the study favored a semi-structured interview approach to ensure depth.

3.1. Research Design

The overarching goal of this study was to conduct an in-depth exploration of the historical development and regulatory evolution of short-stay accommodation (SSA) in the Margaret River regional area, focusing on understanding its implications for local communities, housing dynamics, and businesses. Following insights from Blair et al. (2023), the research design served as a crucial blueprint for addressing these objectives, highlighting the importance of a well-constructed design in generating valid and reliable answers to research questions. Conversely, weak research designs require caution because of their potential to yield outcomes that are unreliable, imprecise, or irrelevant.

In adopting the exploratory research paradigm, the study took a strategic approach to navigate the early stages of inquiry, particularly in the context where the research area was novel or lacked a well-defined theoretical framework dealing with the complexities of the economic, social, environmental, and psychological aspects within the framework of short-stay accommodation (Brink 1998; Ravitch and Riggan 2016). The exploratory design proved instrumental in delving into the subject matter, generating objectives, and identifying potential variables and relationships within the landscape of SSA. This paradigm is especially beneficial when research questions are open-ended and aim to uncover new insights, patterns, or phenomena, characteristics which are fitting for the complex dynamics of short-stay accommodation in regional contexts (Aithal and Aithal 2023).

The flexibility inherent in an exploratory research design accommodated the dynamic nature of the investigative process, allowing adaptability based on emerging findings. This adaptive nature is particularly advantageous when dealing with multifaceted research questions and exploring uncharted territories, as evident in the area of shared accommodation, especially in regional settings where research gaps persist. Furthermore, the inclusion of qualitative methods, such as interviews and content analysis, aligned with the recommendations of Yates and Leggett (2016) and Erickson (2017), providing a nuanced understanding that may be challenging to achieve through more structured approaches. These qualitative methods not only capture nuanced perspectives but also contribute to generating objectives and laying the groundwork for subsequent research phases (Patton 2014). The argument for an exploratory research design is strengthened by its ability to navigate uncertainties, facilitate the generation of questions, and adapt to evolving insights, proving invaluable in situations where the theoretical landscape is not well-established. This, in turn, contributed to the development of a robust research design that aligned with the study's overarching objectives, which deal with the exploration of short-stay accommodation in regional areas, with a focus on unpacking the effect on housing and regional development.

3.2. Research Setting

The Augusta–Margaret River area is located in the South West region of Western Australia and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region (Green 2012). The region is known for its unique and abundant natural environment, which attracts tourists for leisure and meditation activities, including Mammoth Cave, Lake Cave, the Cape to Cape Walk Track, the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse, and Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park (Tourism Western Australia 2019). Approximately half of the population in the South West region resides between Augusta and Margaret River (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development 2019; Tourism Western Australia 2019) (see Figure 1).

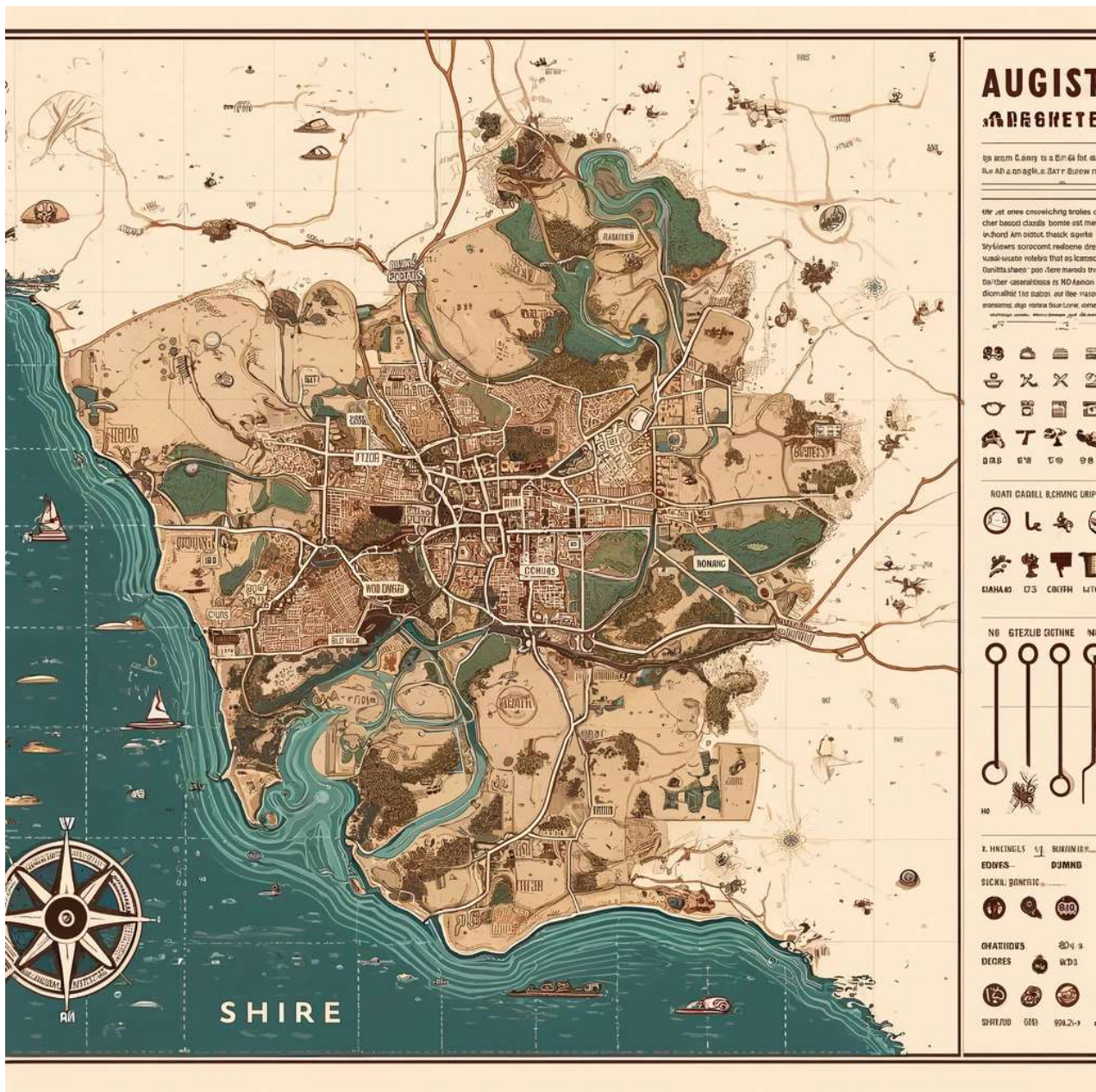


Figure 1. Map of the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River. Source: AI MapQuest.

The Shire of Augusta–Margaret River is one of the 12 local government areas in Western Australia. The Augusta–Margaret River area covers approximately 270 kilometers south of Perth (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development 2019; Green 2012). The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (2019), citing the 2016 Census figures, claimed that Augusta–Margaret River had a population of about 14,000 people (see Figure 2).

The Augusta–Margaret River holds many natural tourist attractions such as Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, viticulture, and Scott National Park, among others. In the South West of Western Australia, the top tourist destinations are Margaret River, Augusta, and Dunsborough. According to Tourism Western Australia (2019), the popular destination visitation sites include wineries, world-famous beaches, tall timber forests, restaurants, and ancient caves. These five activities constitute the bulk of the economic activity in the regional area (see Figure 3 and Table 1 for employment opportunities between 2010 and 11).

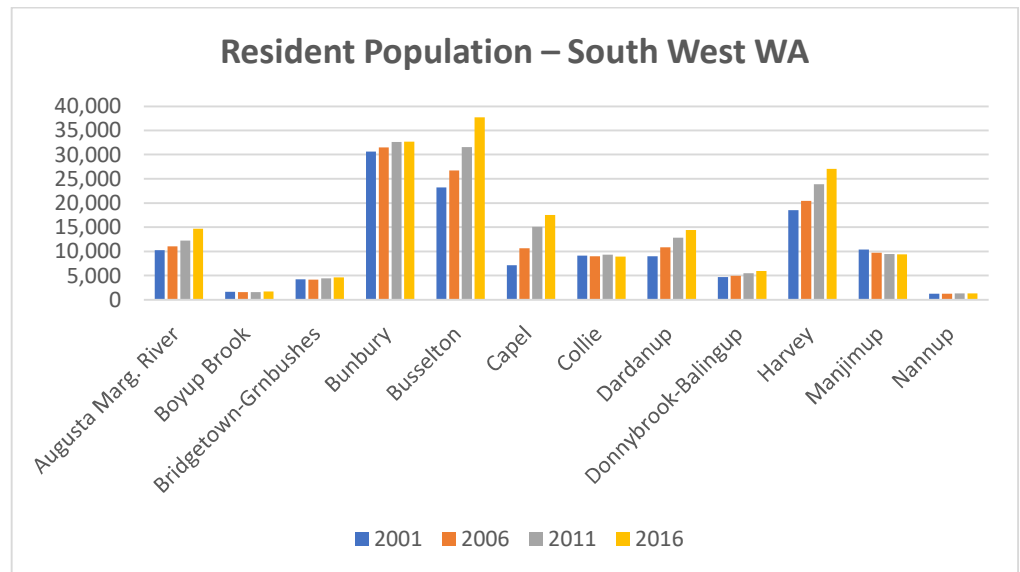


Figure 2. Resident population, South West WA. Source: Shire of Augusta–Margaret River (2021).

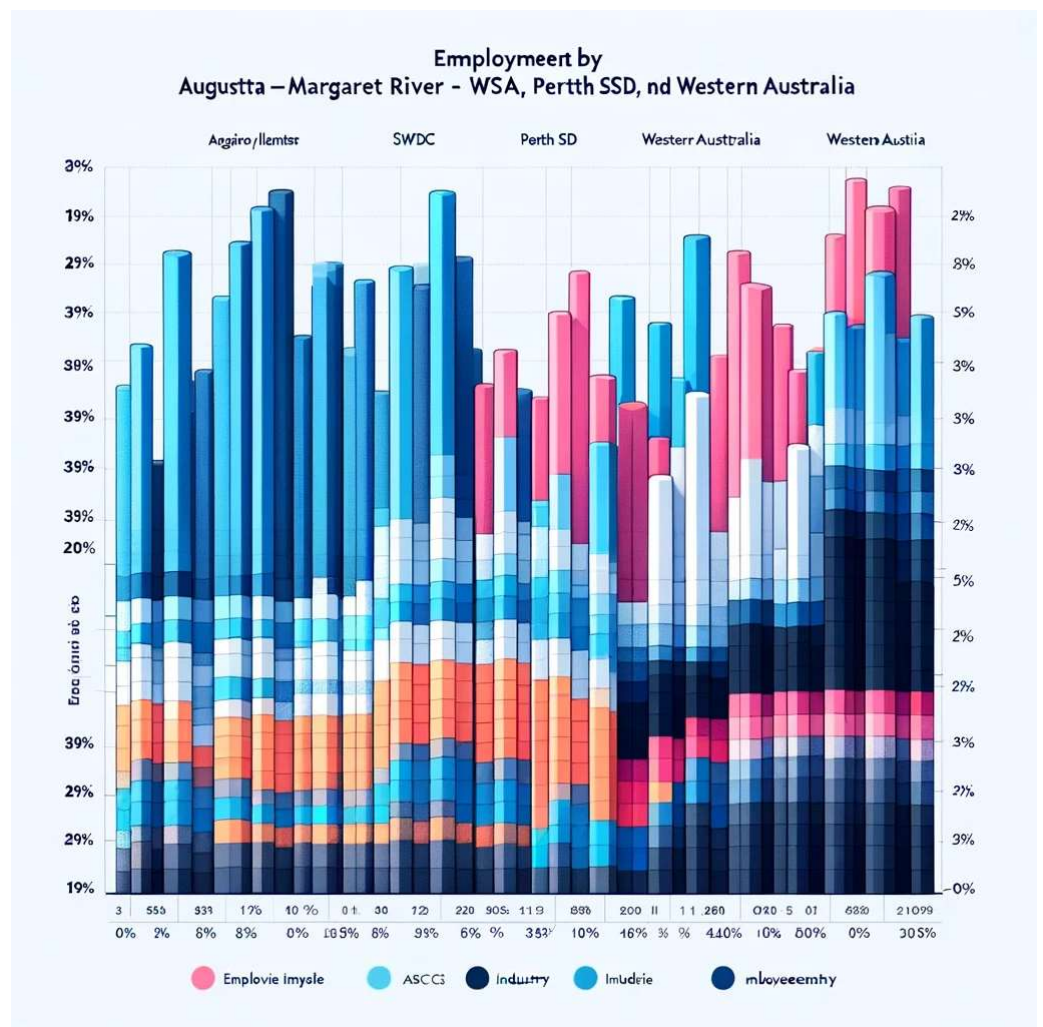


Figure 3. Employment by industry (place of work 2010–2011). Source: Shire of Augusta–Margaret River (2021). <https://www.amrshire.wa.gov.au/getmedia/d5030550-d72c-4316-9bfb-9b5f7441d91d/Annual-Report-2020-21.pdf>, accessed on 5 February 2024.

Table 1. Shire of Augusta–Margaret River: output by sector.

	\$M	%
Manufacturing	\$447.45	28.60%
Construction	\$170.73	10.90%
Tourism	\$157.19	10.10%
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	\$135.48	8.70%
Ownership of dwellings	\$88.20	5.60%
Retail trade	\$67.34	4.30%
Education and training	\$43.42	2.80%
Subtotal	\$1109.80	71.00%

Source: Shire of Augusta–Margaret River (2021).

Figure 3 and Table 1 above demonstrate the critical sectors that contribute to the prosperity of the regional area. The contributions of tourism, agriculture, ownership of dwellings, and retail trade are essential for understanding the multidimensional and multi-faceted impact tourism has on the region. According to the Shire of August–Margaret River (2021), the AMR region faces several challenges, such as the seasonality of tourist visits, reductions in the number of conferences and business tourists, inadequate infrastructure for indoor activities during the winter period, the scarcity of high-end accommodation spaces, competitiveness in the agricultural market, weak broadband and internet connectivity, and a limited diversified economy. However, some of these challenges may be addressed by utilizing unused accommodation spaces within the region. Regulations must be established and monitored, including background checks on hosts, restrictions on the use of stoves, and limitations on the number of stays.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

In line with the recommendations of [Giordano et al. \(2007\)](#), the research committee ensured anonymity and respect for participants, among other ethical considerations. Participants in this study were treated with the utmost respect for their autonomy and right to full disclosure. Prior to engaging in research activities, a seminar was conducted, informing the participants, who constituted operators who have become politically interested, the Chamber of Commerce, real estate firms, management firms of e-hospitality platforms, and the local council members in charge of regulating e-hospitality, of the arrangement to conduct doctoral research within the upcoming months. Participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study, its purpose, and potential risks involved. Informed consent, a cornerstone of ethical research practices, was obtained from each participant ([Sarafis et al. 2014](#)). This process ensured that individuals willingly and knowingly agreed to participate, contributing to the ethical foundation of the research.

3.4. Sampling

Choosing an appropriate sample size in qualitative research remains subject of ongoing debate and practical uncertainty ([Baker et al. 2017](#); [Vasileiou et al. 2018](#)). Despite the existence of principles, guidelines, and tools aimed at assisting researchers in setting and justifying sample sizes, insufficient reporting on the adequacy of a sample size persists across various disciplinary fields ([Baker et al. 2017](#); [Vasileiou et al. 2018](#)). This underlines the critical role sample size plays as a marker of the quality of qualitative research ([Vasileiou et al. 2018](#)).

In this study, a combination of non-probability, purposive, and snowball sampling methods was deployed. This diverse approach ensured the generation of a broad spectrum of perspectives within the target population. The determination of the sample size was guided by the principle of data saturation, aligning with the principles of qualitative research outlined by [Patton \(2014\)](#).

Challenges in determining scientifically validated sampling frameworks and sample sizes in qualitative research stem from the historical evolution of the qualitative methodology, rooted in disciplines such as anthropology (Bernard 2011), sociology (Kendall 2011), nursing (Speziale et al. 2011; Tuckett 2004), education (Bogdan and Biklen 2007), and public health (Curry et al. 2006; Trotter II 2012). The diverse origins have led to a plethora of discipline-specific terminologies, lacking standardization (Trotter II 2012). However, systematic and scientifically sound methods for qualitative sampling have been well-established (Crabtree 1999; Miles and Huberman 1994; Patton 2002). Unlike quantitative sampling, which relies on statistical probability theory, qualitative sampling follows purposeful or theoretical principles. The objective is to pinpoint participants who possess rich information, focusing on characteristics, knowledge, or experiences pertinent to the phenomenon under investigation. The sufficiency of the sample size is gauged through the principle of theoretical saturation, denoting the point at which successive data reviews yield no novel concepts (Pope and Mays 1995).

Various recommendations and numerical guidelines have been proposed based on experts' experiences in qualitative research (Vasileiou et al. 2018). Although it is practically impossible to stipulate an actual amount that is worthy of investigation, there is confusion in providing a numerical stance on the sample size, dependent on the guidelines and protocols of qualitative research.

The inquiry of "How many?" resonates within the realm of qualitative research, revealing its intricate implications (Baker et al. 2017). Adler and Adler (1987), in separating the qualitative and quantitative methods, stipulated that participants in interviews emphasize clearer perspectives on a subject matter, grounded in the fundamental nature of the research objectives (Baker et al. 2017). While quantitative methodologies seek objective correlations to portray "what people do", qualitative approaches aspire to cultivate subjective insights into how and why people perceive, interact, reflect, interpret, and role-take (Baker et al. 2017). In qualitative research, the elusive nature of exploration reigns supreme, and the path to saturation, a key principle of qualitative sampling, is meandering. The call for saturation is central, emphasizing the point at which no new insights emerge. Despite its acknowledged ideal status, the road to saturation is not without challenges. Alan Bryman flagged the conundrum it poses, intertwining sampling, data collection, and analysis into an inseparable tapestry, rendering it impossible to predetermine the number of interviews at the project's inception. Several scholars, including Adler and Adler, Ragin, and others, echoed the sentiment that the answer hinges on methodological and epistemological perspectives. Adler and Adler's pragmatic advice to graduate students spanned a range between 12 and 60, with 30 as the mean, while Ragin simplified it to 20 for an MA thesis and 50 for a PhD dissertation. However, the consensus is that the number is context-dependent, influenced by the researcher's epistemic community and their ability to convince critics. Jensen's realization that the true value of research lies in the quality of analysis, and the care and time invested, rather than the sheer number of interviews conducted (Jensen 2010). As qualitative interviews unfold, Denzin suggested treating them as a series of instances for in-depth analysis (Denzin 2001), while Back illuminated the performative nature of interviews, urging researchers to scrutinize their impact on shaping and reflecting the "real" world (Back 2007). Daniel Miller raised questions about the appropriateness of interviews as the primary data-gathering method (Miller 2003). Additionally, external determinants such as time constraints, the participants' accessibility, and institutional demands play a crucial role in determining the number of interviews conducted (Flick 2009a). According to Flick, it involves the interplay between internal determinants, including methodological and epistemological considerations and external factors (Flick 2009b). Insights from early career researchers, highlighted the dynamic nature of research projects and the necessity for adaptability in response to institutional demands and evolving insights (Yuval-Davis 2010).

While challenges persist in establishing clear-cut guidelines for the size of qualitative samples, principles such as theoretical saturation, the information's power, and informational redundancy serve as guiding frameworks. The intricacies of qualitative research,

encompassing methodological, theoretical, epistemological, and ideological pluralism, necessitate an ongoing dialogue and empirical investigations to enhance understanding and practice in determining sample sizes in qualitative research. Overall, the answer to “How many qualitative interviews are enough?” is a resounding “It depends.” Yet, within this intricate web of uncertainties, the insights shared by researchers provide readers of this thesis with valuable guidance, paving the way for a more informed and context-sensitive approach to determining the sample size.

3.5. Data Collection

The research used a robust data collection framework, drawing inspiration from [Momeni et al. \(2018\)](#) and embracing the interpretivist paradigm. Recognizing the exploratory nature of the study, strategic preference was given to a semi-structured interview approach, aiming to delve into the depths of the participants’ perspectives. Purposeful recruitment ensured representation from essential stakeholders, encompassing realtors, short-stay property owners, managers, council officials, Chamber of Commerce representatives, and other relevant contributors (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of statistics.

	Gender	Participant’s Identifier	Interview Option	Location	Duration
Consultant	F	6	Face to face	Margaret River	34:06 min
Consultant	M	7	Face to face	Margaret River	40:52 min
Consultant	M	1	Face to face	Margaret River	26 min
Owner/manager	F	2	Face to face	Witchcliffe	58:56 min
Owner/manager	F	3	Face to face	Margaret River	12:25 min
Owner/manager	F	4	Face to face	Gracetown	45:02 min
Owner/manager	F	5	Face to face	Prevelly	41:46 min
Owner/manager	M and F	12 and 13	Face to face	Margaret River	41:39 min
Owner/manager	M and F	15 and 16	Face to face	Margaret River	45:12 min
Owner/manager	F	18	Face to face	Margaret River	27:03 min
Owner/manager	F	17	Face to face	Margaret River	36:02 min
Management firm	M	14	Phone	Dunsborough	51:00 min
Chamber of Commerce representative	F	8	Face to face	Margaret River	41:16 min
Managing director	M	9	Face to face	Witchcliffe	43:55 min
Council officials	M, M	10 and 11	Face to face	Margaret River	1 h

The selection criteria were meticulously aligned with the research questions and the diversity of insights needed for a comprehensive exploration. The interview design phase adhered to a process involving the creation of semi-structured interview protocols, questions, and guidelines. To ensure both depth and relevance to the research objectives, the interviews’ structure was intricately crafted, capturing the diverse voices of participants. Key themes such as “Airbnb”, “availability and affordability of housing”, “employment”, “population dynamics”, and “zoning laws” were thoughtfully integrated into the interviews’ design.

Transparency and ethical standards were prioritized during the actual interviews, which were conducted either face-to-face or via Microsoft Teams. Participants were encouraged to candidly share their perspectives, experiences, and insights related to short-stay accommodation in the Margaret River region.

A combination of non-probability, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling methods was adopted to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives within the target population,

enhancing the richness and depth of the collected data. The determination of the sample size followed the principles of qualitative research, aiming for data saturation rather than adhering to a fixed number of participants. After the interview, data management and storage processes were implemented to ensure both security and accessibility. Thematic analysis, chosen due to its wide acceptance in qualitative research, was applied to the qualitative data. Despite the initial plan to use Leximancer, technical issues led to a shift to thematic analysis, ensuring a rigorous and in-depth exploration of the emerging themes. The research findings were communicated through several comprehensive and technical reports to the Shire, potentially incorporating visual aids such as concept maps. Nonetheless, the following paragraphs provide further information concerning data collection.

Sampling bias: The study used purposive and snowball sampling methods to capture a diverse range of perspectives within the target population. While these methods allowed for a broad spectrum of participants, there is inherent bias in the choice of location, due to the spread or prevalence of Airbnb in the area. Many Airbnb operators were in the Margaret River axis; hence, most of the research was conducted in the area. Because of the inherent limitation to the dominance of the city of Margaret River in the research, the research focused on Margaret River than the Shire.

Voluntary response bias: The study encouraged participants to candidly share their perspectives. The participants were assured of anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses to mitigate concerns about this bias, and, as outlined in the consent form, we stipulated the potential impact and use of the voluntary response bias and how it may affect decision-making within the region.

Self-interest study: the consent form clearly stipulated the use of the survey being conducted and how it would be disseminated for the objectivity and credibility of the study findings.

Perceived lack of anonymity: The study consent form clearly assured the participants of the confidentiality of their responses and explained the data management process. The study addressed concerns about perceived lack of anonymity. The participants could feel confident that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality, thereby reducing fears of potential negative consequences for providing honest answers.

Response bias: The study consent form clearly provided an explanation of the study's purpose, and the assurance of confidentiality may have helped mitigate the response bias. Participants may feel more comfortable providing honest responses knowing that their identity will not be revealed and that their data will be securely stored.

Non-response bias: While the invitation to participate was clear and transparent, by providing contact information for inquiries and offering to share a summative report of the research, the study encouraged participation and engagement, potentially mitigating non-response bias to some extent.

Self-interest study: The study consent form explicitly stated that the survey was part of the requirements for the researcher's doctoral studies and that ethical approval had been granted. The study demonstrated transparency and credibility. Participants could trust that the research was conducted with academic integrity rather than from self-interest.

Perceived lack of anonymity: The study did not explicitly discuss measures to ensure the anonymity of participants. Researchers should assure participants of the confidentiality of their responses and implement measures to protect their privacy throughout the study. This could include anonymizing data during analysis and securely storing any identifiable information collected during the study.

Loaded questions: The study did not mention efforts to mitigate loaded questions. Researchers should ensure that survey questions are clear, unbiased, and free from suggestive language that could influence the respondents' answers. Pilot testing of the survey instruments with a diverse group of participants can help identify and revise any potentially loaded questions.

Non-response bias: The study did not address non-response bias. Researchers should acknowledge the possibility of non-response bias and discuss its potential impact on

the study's findings. Sensitivity analyses or comparisons between participants and non-participants could help assess the magnitude of non-response bias.

Survey weights: The study did not mention the use of survey weights. Researchers can consider using weighting techniques to adjust for differences in the response rates across demographic groups or other relevant variables. This could help improve the representativeness of the sample and enhance the generalizability of the study's findings.

3.6. Data Analysis

The research used thematic analysis as the primary method for exploring and understanding the underlying meanings, patterns, and experiences of short-stay providers in the Margaret River region. [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) provided the foundational framework for the analysis, which began by immersing the researchers in the data to gain familiarity and a depth of understanding. This involved reading and re-reading the transcripts from various stakeholders, including short-stay providers, council members, association representatives, and realtors.

4. Results and Analyses

The findings of this research relate to the aim specified *ab initio*. Understanding how pricing affects the relationship between housing shortages and short-term accommodation is important for determining how affordable and readily available housing is in the Margaret River region. The result showed that price dynamics and market forces play a pivotal role in its effect on the affordability and availability of housing; on the other hand, migration from urban to rural Australia has been a key factor affecting this transition.

4.1. Price Dynamics, Market Forces, and the Availability and Affordability of Longer Stays

In exploring the dynamics of pricing in the short-stay market and its influence on housing shortages for long-stay accommodation, we explored price fluctuations and disparities between short-stay vendors and its impact on long-stay accommodation, and how the profit-seeking behavior of property owners, managers, and management firms has impacted on the affordability and availability of housing in the Margaret River area.

Pricing for a short stay at Margaret Rivier depends on the corresponding location or seasonality, as there is variety in the accommodation choices in the region. For instance, the respondents stated the following

We are getting... slightly below peak rates in winter and we are going to... between 10 to 20% cheaper, depending on how bad it is; obviously, we monitor what everyone is doing, sort of 2, 3 times a week, we monitor our position, and they monitor us (1). Then (sometimes) we see the prices going up and down all day long. Some of them have got the price at 150 and we pop ours down to 149 and then now later 148, and we make it to 145 but now we are finding that the prices are being kept higher. (6)

The assertion by the respondents corresponds with the findings of [Toader et al. \(2022\)](#), which asserted that short-stay prices influence supplies and listing locations. In a separate paper, [Deboosere et al. \(2019\)](#) argued that neighborhood variations affect the pricing of a property.

Thus, a hike in the pricing based on the housing valuation of the property influences mortgage prices, which, in turn, impacts on landlords' repayments, which invariably lead to rental increases. The cost of long-stay accommodation in the Margaret River region, according to respondents, was expressed as follows.

Certainly, short-stay accommodation does occupy some houses which will otherwise be available for long-stay accommodation, so will tend to tighten supply and potentially push up rents, I guess. Having said that, I don't think rent down here are as much different to rents in Perth for similar houses. Ehm! Short stay accommodation does allow people with higher values to maximize their return, I

guess, because there is a natural rental ceiling, if you like, for long-term accommodation, because is not high-income earners in the area; you're struggling to find people who will pay more than \$450 a week in rent. (2)

Another respondent pointed out that

We have many instances of where people have their property in the rental market for longer term rental, but they charge tenants seasonal short-term rates. By doing so, instead of getting 300 a week, they can get 300 a day. (17; 12)

This has implications for those seeking long-stay rentals based on the implications of cost. This form of long-stay in approach but short-stay in action is misleading and misleading because it reduces the amount accruable to the government via tax and registration fees. While this action may now not be illegal, it is not ethical.

While the unfolding argument may seem as if it is short-stays that are causing or have caused affordability issues in long-stay accommodation, we can categorically point out that price of the short-stay accommodation and the lack of corresponding wages that are commensurate with the price of the short-stay accommodation as the reason behind the housing affordability issues in the Margaret River region. The consensus in the literature is that the presence of Airbnb can contribute to increases in rental prices and reduce the availability of long-term rental housing (Barron et al. 2018). Our study suggested that the cost of short-stay accommodation and the lack of a corresponding wage on par with the pricing of short-stay accommodation contribute to the affordability of longer-stay accommodation in Margaret River region.

The conversion rate of properties from long-term rentals to short-term rentals, particularly through platforms such as Airbnb, has become a growing trend among property owners seeking higher economic gains (Barron et al. 2018). However, this shift in rental strategy has significant implications for the availability of long-term housing options. Research by Franco and Santos (2021) suggest that such conversions can reduce the supply of long-term rentals in the market, leading to increased competition among individuals seeking stable and affordable housing. As a result, this imbalance between supply and demand can contribute to higher prices for long-term rentals, making it more challenging for individuals and families to secure suitable housing options within their budget. Nonetheless, the clustering of Airbnb rentals in a specific area due to zoning laws can contribute to the accessibility of housing for longer-stay rentals (Ma et al. 2020), particularly where there are increases in the tourist footprint in the neighborhood.

A respondent acknowledged a different perspective regarding the housing availability issue in Margaret River, highlighting that some homeowners:

... want to come at Christmas, and then Easter, they want to send some friends down, (they cannot partake in long-stay accommodation because) long stay has the obligation to keep someone there for 12 months. . . , you know, they want to be able to access to their property, they can't do that if they are rented out. (3)

While this has implication for the availability of housing, the cost of short-stay accommodation makes it difficult, if not impossible, for single moms or people with one stream of income to live and flourish in the area. It makes it worse for the people it creates opportunities for such as lawnmowers, gardeners, cleaners, and bag packers to see these opportunities catered away owing to the affordability issues of longer-stay accommodation in Margaret River.

The government therefore has a responsibility to shape the functionality of the sector. However, respondents in the research alluded to zoning regulations and regulations in general for the short-stay accommodation in the area as rate revenue. One respondent commended the recruitment of a local sheriff by stating:

There is a difference between having the capacity and having the desire to do something. The Sheriff of Margret River, for instance, after some pressure was put on by people like us have hired a compliance officer whose sole job is to check short-stay accommodation to ensure they are registered. If they are not

registered, to report them and they are charged to court if they are not closed. The local sheriff was very reluctant to do that, but pressure was put on them to do it. This compliance officer was hired last year, and they performed well and found several properties operating illegally and were shut down, fines were issued, and the sheriff was pleased because the fines issued exceeded the cost of hiring the compliance officer. (7; 14; 9; 18)

The discussion about regulations demonstrated the value added by regulation and demonstrated non-performance in recruitment, deployment, and enforcement, as a single individual has been recruited to perform the entire task for the municipality despite its size and the number of homes and activities to monitor.

Well, you must ask, what is the value of the regulation, what are they aiming to achieve? Are they just aiming to achieve increased rates? Which is essentially what it is at the moment: just increasing the rate revenue by charging people, and what is the purpose of the regulation. Ah. . . if there is no actual real functionality, or value adding or anything from the regulation, it's simply a rate revenue thing and I feel so despaired. It just doesn't pick up and catch up everyone. And people who do the right things and get approvals are very small numbers of people. I can't understand why there is regulation at all, unless they can think of a way of consistently ensuring that everybody here is approved, ummm, and also ability to also consider regular, like, you know, every year, to do, eh. . . inspections. I mean, what is the approval about. . . , what is the purpose of it? And then you get our paying staff to monitor it, which will probably exceed maybe the revenue. The county is taking in this huge and huge responsibility, and there is no real purpose to it except rate revenue. (14)

The idea of rate revenue helps the government to provide some form of social redistribution by providing infrastructure, maintenance of parks and recreational areas, and ongoing services for the neighborhood, which will include providing social financing for those experiencing hardship owing to the negative effect of the short-stay accommodation. However, despite the rates generated over the years, the council has failed to utilize the funds for regenerative purposes that reduce the impact of the short-stay accommodation; rather, there are growing concerns about skyrocketing prices for longer-stay accommodation.

4.2. Population Movement and Effects on the Local Housing Market Amid the Pandemic

The ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent implementation of travel restrictions have had a profound effect on various aspects, including the tourist footprint, the population's mobility, and the local housing market in the Margaret River region, as observed in other comparable locations. Nevertheless, the narrative diverges somewhat in the context of MR. In numerous regions and states, a comprehensive cessation of tourism activities was observed. In the context of market research, the observed phenomenon pertained to a discernible shift in the patterns of individuals engaging in visitation activities. For instance, a respondent stated that

Since COVID, there was the main difference obviously. We've been getting zero interstate and obviously completely zero oversea, which normally be about 45% of our market. (7)

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Western Australia implemented a lockdown policy that imposed restrictions on the mobility of individuals and the transportation of goods both within and beyond the boundaries of Western Australia. Furthermore, the government explicitly discouraged individuals from embarking on travel to Bali or any other destinations. The circumstance has resulted in what one participant has aptly described as restricted accessibility for travelers or compelled revisitation. The participant posited that a substantial portion of the lodgers in their dwellings were individuals who may have previously journeyed to Margaret River approximately a decade ago, and due to

the constrained array of travel alternatives, they had embarked upon a revisit to Margaret River after a decade-long hiatus.

Have you been in Margaret River before? They say Oh! Yes, we've been here many times, but we haven't been for 10 years... They're now being forced to revisit. Because they don't have a lot of other options. So that's one thing that has changed... but normally, we will probably spend up to 45 min with guests that are interstate or overseas, explaining those type of things that they can see and do. Whereas with Perth people, they don't even want to know the ideal. (15,16)

The Western Australian Government used a strategic approach in conducting a comprehensive survey of various localities, including the famous Margaret River region. The implementation of the lockdown policy engendered a notable transformation in the realm of hospitality finance, whereby hotels found themselves grappling with the arduous task of procuring financial resources to sustain their day-to-day operations, according to one of the respondents:

When the lockdown happened, a lot of short-term people tried to fill their houses with long-term residents to bring that revenue in and it's the same with the hotels: they tried to get some people in for longer stays. (8;10)

The statement aligns with the findings presented by [Farmaki et al. \(2020\)](#), which elucidated a notable transition from shorter durations of stay to extended periods within the European context, primarily attributed to the impact of the ongoing pandemic. Nonetheless, our result adds to the literature by demonstrating that hotels were also taking in longer-stay consumers to augment their financial burdens. This study advances the existing knowledge by showcasing the transformative roles or resilience of hoteliers in a regional area by providing a residential kind of long-stay accommodation, offering rooms for extended periods of stay within the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River.

During this temporal interval, there was observed a notable phenomenon characterized by the movement of individuals from Perth, as well as other surrounding areas, towards the region of Margaret River. This resulted in what one respondent eloquently referred to as:

[A] sudden huge increase, probably because of interstate promotions, and the pandemic came and brought us back to square one again. Our concern is that as the market picks up, we are still facing a situation of a flooded market with houses predominantly as competitors. (2; 4)

The population dynamics of Margaret River have undergone a revolutionary transformation, primarily influenced by an influx of individuals who are in pursuit of tranquilly, opulence, and magnificence. This significant shift has yielded far-reaching consequences for the local housing infrastructure. There are two primary factors contributing to the prevalent predicament of housing within the region. Firstly, we observed deficiencies in social housing and substantial backlogs throughout Australia, which have engendered this issue ([Mangan and Hyman 2021](#)). Secondly, the census figures further demonstrated that the conundrum is compounded by a population growth rate of 17.8% between 2011 and 2021, and a 3.2% increase by 2023. It is noteworthy, however, that both factors have coincided with a surge in inflation, thereby exerting a detrimental influence on consumer consumption and significantly diminishing the purchasing power of numerous households, particularly the over 14,000 households reliant on a single income in the South West region ([Lefebvre 2021](#)).

Specifically, it was determined that the population exhibited a remarkable increase of 3.2%, thereby establishing itself as the most substantial growth observed among the various regional areas within Western Australia. In contrast, it is noteworthy that the entirety of Western Australia underwent a notable expansion of 18% during the aforementioned time period. The figures serve as a testament to the rapid rate at which the populace is proliferating, thereby accentuating the considerable burden it imposes upon the housing market at the regional level.

The significance of this population influx on the housing market should not be underestimated, as it tends to affect rental prices, housing availability, and the broader housing landscape. The surge in housing demand has precipitated an upward trajectory in rental prices, property prices, and the domino effect in the accessibility of affordable housing alternatives. The circumstance poses considerable challenges for both established inhabitants and prospective individuals in search of accommodation within the vicinity.

5. Discussion

Notwithstanding the rise of short-stay accommodation, exemplified by platforms such as Airbnb, has significantly impacted the housing landscape (Miller et al. 2020). The prevalence of short-term rentals has diminished the availability of long-term rental properties. Consequently, it has created an avalanche of conversion and competition among peers, and both problems have exacerbated affordability (Ndaguba 2024).

Notably, the findings demonstrated that population movements have resulted in sparse availability while the hike in short-stay accommodation pricing has impacted the affordability of housing. Marcin (1974), conversely, argued that declining population growth is responsible for the increased supply of housing. Lindert (1974) concurred that land scarcity is a direct result of population growth. Similarly, Mason (1996) demonstrated that factors that have implications for either the economic or social impact on communities may also have an effect on housing. This is consistent with Milzen's (2022) argument regarding the existing housing shortages and affordability challenges, namely that as populations expand, the demand for housing increases, straining the available housing supply. This increased demand has implications for housing scarcities and elevated prices in Margaret River, posing difficulties for those seeking a particular kind of accommodation that is also affordable (Ndaguba et al. 2024). This study showed that short-term rentals in this regional area are plagued by a heightened eviction rate, an increase in the sales of homes for digital commerce, increased homelessness owing to affordability issues, and the non-availability of housing within the region for families on a single income. To this extent, the argument is that the increase in demand for short-term housing has created some level of dissatisfaction for residents, owing to its negative effects of displacement and hikes in prices.

In essence, the housing crisis has stemmed from two elements, namely the dominance/clustering of short-stay accommodation and the hike in prices. Both can be strongly attributed to affordability than availability. Hence, the price dynamics within the short-stay market, as demonstrated in the study, have also influenced housing shortages in the long-term sector, since market fluctuations and disparities in short-stay prices directly affect the affordability and availability of housing for residents. Visser (2022). And Ndaguba et al. (2024) argue that increasing short-stay prices might encourage property owners to prioritize transient rentals over long-term options, further contributing to the scarcity of extended housing options. Price dynamics carry broader socioeconomic and community implications. Furthermore, Malpezzi (2023) argue that housing shortages may have implications for individuals' physical and mental well-being; however, those are beyond or not within the scope of this study, though they could lead to housing stress, which has implications. Bower et al. (2023) demonstrates that housing instability and unaffordability result in heightened stress, anxiety, and isolation (Kim and Burgard 2022). According to Keene and Blankenship (2023), overcrowding, subpar living conditions, financial strain, and poverty are associated with the housing crisis, contributing to compromised mental well-being in the affected individuals and communities. However, with mortgage prices, food inflation, and the general cost of living escalating without a commensurate increase in wages, there are fewer options for homeowners to monetize their properties other than placing them on the short-stay market.

However, there must be a balance, and the government needs to establish such a balance through regulative processes that considers the local uniqueness of each region, given their housing demand, supply, and shortfall, as well as the opportunity for investment

in housing, and whether the area or region attracts a significant amount of visitors that could disrupt the housing economy and impoverish locals. Hence, mitigating housing challenges necessitates collaboration and holistic strategies. Planners and policymakers play a pivotal role in offering alternative housing options and implementing measures to safeguard the vulnerable. Embracing the principles of shared prosperity and value co-creation can guide the development of solutions. Suggestions for addressing housing challenges encompass rural revitalization initiatives, establishment of special economic zones, and policies addressing displacement and ensuring affordable housing access.

6. Conclusions

The study undertaken in the Margaret River region has shed light on the intricate interplay among short-term lodging, price dynamics, and the persistent housing crisis. Through these findings, we have gained profound insights into the consequential impact of pricing fluctuations within the short-stay market, which have significantly exacerbated the existing challenges of housing scarcity and affordability for long-term accommodation. The discernible disparities in pricing strategies among short-stay providers has directly contributed to the problems of availability and affordability faced by residents in the region. Moreover, the exploitation of this situation through the imposition of seasonal short-term rates on long-term rentals underscores the urgency of addressing the broader housing affordability crisis. Additionally, this research has extended its purview to encompass the far-reaching implications of short-term accommodation on the psychological well-being and overall welfare of the local populace. The documented increase in stress, anxiety, and isolation precipitated by the housing crisis calls for a comprehensive approach to mitigate the profound effects on mental health. These distressing outcomes are further compounded by substandard living conditions, overcrowding, financial strain, and socioeconomic disparities, thereby necessitating multifaceted interventions.

As we contemplate a holistic response to the challenges presented, it becomes imperative to navigate the intricate fabric of policy interventions and sustainable solutions. An intricate understanding of the interplay between price regulation, the presence of short-stay accommodation, and the persistent housing shortages is essential for informed decision-making. Within the operational realm of the short-stay market, businesses must judiciously consider a plethora of factors, ranging from managerial practices and reputation to geographic dynamics and seasonal variations, to tailor effective pricing strategies that harmonize the market's complexities.

Furthermore, fostering collaborative partnerships among diverse stakeholders, such as hosts, property managers, management firms, communities, and local councils, offers a promising avenue for envisioning a housing landscape characterized by inclusivity and equity. By adhering to the principles of shared prosperity and value co-creation, we can collectively endeavor to shape a housing future that resonates with the needs of all constituents. In summary, the insights gleaned from this study, coupled with the global housing challenges, necessitate a nuanced and all-encompassing approach to tackle the multifaceted housing crisis in Margaret River. Armed with a holistic understanding of the intricate interplay between short-stay accommodation, pricing dynamics, housing shortages, and their intricate repercussions, stakeholders are poised to collaboratively construct resilient policies and sustainable resolutions, fostering an inclusive and equitable housing landscape for generations to come. Future research must attempt to unravel the implication of housing shortages and costs on the physical and mental health of residents in destination areas.

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