

# Nashville: The Creative Business Cluster and its Life Cycle

Research Article

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**Abstract:** Nashville, Tennessee, otherwise known as Music City, exhibits the characteristics of what has been called a creative business cluster that is centred around the business of country music. The presence of major record labels in the city devoted to the genre of music has created career opportunities for various types of music professionals as well as a community where there is a sense of camaraderie and cooperation among competitors. The community's success has bolstered the local economy due to the successes of the genre of music as well as the tourism country music has brought to the city. Business clusters have been shown to have life cycles that include the emerging phase, growing phase, sustaining stage and declining phase. This study utilises research from the literature on business clusters and their life cycles, along with the literature gained from the interviews of workers within the market, to determine where Music City currently lies along its creative cluster life cycle.

**Keywords:** *creative business cluster • business cluster lifecycle • Nashville, Music City • technological change • country music*

## 1. Introduction

Nashville, Tennessee, otherwise known as Music City, exhibits the characteristics of what has been called a creative business cluster (Baker 2016). The cluster is centred around the business of country music (Baker 2016). The presence of major record labels devoted to the genre has created career opportunities for various types of music professionals as well as a community where there is a sense of camaraderie and cooperation among competitors (Hodges 2022). The community's success has bolstered the local economy due to the successes of the genre as well as the tourism dollars that country music has brought to the city of Nashville. Due to the clustering phenomenon in the market and the success of country music becoming a market with artists recognised around the world, the city has seen exponential growth for many years (Fausset 2014).

Business clusters bring thriving economic advantages to their community and the community's workers and small businesses; however, those advantages do not last forever. Research has shown that business clusters have life cycles that include an emerging phase, a growing phase, a sustaining or mature stage, and a declining phase (Jankowiak 2020). Ostapenko et al. (2022) explained that clusters will move from one stage in their life cycle to the next but do so at a slow rate by changing their structures and evolving over a long period of time. In the past few years, there has been an increase in large corporations acquiring smaller companies within the Nashville market. This changing landscape may be proving detrimental to the benefits associated with creative business clusters for individuals and small businesses and may influence the cluster's position in its life cycle. In Hodges' (2021) study on international acquisitions within the Nashville market, it was recommended that further research be conducted

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on the market's life cycle to determine what stage the creative business cluster may currently exemplify due to the current rise of acquisitions and dwindling small family-owned businesses. This current study utilises research from the literature on business clusters and their life cycles, along with the literature gained from Hodges' (2021) study on international acquisition within the market, to determine where Music City currently lies along its creative cluster life cycle.

## 2. Review of Literature

A study of where Nashville lies within its life cycle as a creative business cluster should start by examining the general literature on business clusters. This will help to establish that the city, specifically the area called Music Row, qualifies as a creative business cluster. Next, the life cycles of creative business clusters should then be reviewed in-depth to examine the different stages that a creative business cluster may experience and what characteristics are exemplified at each stage. A close look at the literature on the local market should follow. Hodges (2021) interviewed workers within the cluster who have faced the acquisition of their organisation by international firms. The research revealed the traditional characteristics of the market of cooperation and camaraderie and how those characteristics are evolving through the shift from many small independent firms to a small number of large firms. Examination of Hodges' (2021) research should provide strong insight into the current characteristics of the Nashville creative cluster and provide a good foundation establishing what life cycle stage the creative business cluster currently exemplifies.

### 2.1 Creative Business Clusters

The clustering of businesses in a certain geographic location is a phenomenon that occurs frequently in industries of innovation and creativity such as Nashville, the home of country music. Clusters can provide economic benefits to the local economy as well as competitive advantages to the businesses within the cluster (Romanova et al. 2019). Clustering has also been known to revive urban areas and even help to foster innovation (Lehtonen et al., 2020). For a creative business cluster to form, first there must be a hub or core business around which an industry is based (Ye et al. 2020). Smaller firms will then locate in the same geographical area of the central hub to benefit from its capabilities and resources. This phenomenon is often exemplified in the tech industry. For example, Boeing serves as a hub for businesses supporting the airline manufacturing industry in Seattle, Washington (Ye et al. 2020). Gupta et al. (2020) described another cluster centred around the electric car industry where battery makers, tech companies involved in self-driving software, and electromagnet companies have all located their operations near the electric car manufacturers to find competitive advantages. The creation of jobs, infrastructure growth and overall investment in a local economy that spawns from a business cluster can greatly benefit the region where the cluster resides (Romanova et al. 2019). The chances for success for small businesses can be greatly increased by locating within a business cluster due to economies of scope and scale (Júnior et al. 2019). Small businesses within a cluster also tend to work together with the hub and their competitors for mutual advantage. Gupta et al. (2020) explained that as more firms join a business cluster, an ecosystem can form that benefits all companies within the local market. Cluster participants will then tend to share resources through mutual cooperation (Denney et al. 2020).

Creative business clusters have been shown to significantly drive the economic development of a region (Escalona-Orcano et al. 2018). While this is great for the city that houses the creative business cluster, it may be detrimental to smaller communities if their creatives leave to be in proximity to a cluster. Gutierrez-Posada et al. (2022) pointed out that in the United Kingdom, 53% of jobs in the creative industry and 44% of creative organisations are found in just five locations. A positive impact of business clustering is that employment seems to increase in areas where the phenomenon occurs (Gutierrez-Posada et al. 2022). Urban development has also been shown to increase (Gutierrez-Posada et al. 2022).

In creative industries, such as the film industry, clusters occur around where movies are made. Hollywood is an excellent example of a creative business cluster where the movie studios serve as a hub and the city is filled with directors, writers, actors, agents, and schools all clustering together to take advantage of the benefits the movie studios provide. The music industry is similar to the film industry. Instead of movie studios, the hubs in the music industry are the major record labels. The major record labels provide the infrastructure to manufacture and release

music to consumers. There are three main music centres in the United States that display creative business cluster characteristics. Los Angeles, New York and Nashville all are locations where the major record labels have based operations (Baskerville & Baskerville 2019: 77). Creative clusters have formed in each city to take advantage of the label presence. The clusters are composed of songwriters, singers, producers, studios, musicians, agents, managers, publishers, tour bus companies and more.

## 2.2 Business Cluster Lifecycles

Similar to consumer products, business clusters have been shown to have life cycles that begin with their formation, exist for a time and then eventually decline or evolve (Denney, et al. 2020). Ostapenko et al. (2022) further explained that clusters are not a phenomenon that is static. They will show changes in their structures and evolve slowly over time throughout their life cycle. The stages in a business cluster life cycle include emergence, growth, maturation, and decline or renewal (Denney, et al. 2020). Jankowiak (2020) further defined the life cycle stages as types of clusters, classifying them as embryonic, established, mature or declining. Each stage has been shown to embody certain identifiable characteristics (Menzel & Fornahl 2010). Embryonic clusters are in the emergence stage because they are in the early stages of development. A hub or multiple hubs have been established and businesses and workers begin to locate within proximity of the hub for the perceived benefits (Menzel & Fornahl 2010). Established clusters exemplify the growth stage and further development of the cluster. As more businesses and workers locate themselves near the hubs, the market experiences exponential growth and prosperity for all involved in the cluster (Menzel & Fornahl 2010). Mature clusters, or those in the maturation stage, are stable but may be having problems with further growth. Menzel & Fornahl (2010) explained that the benefits of being in the cluster may begin to dissipate as growth becomes stagnant and cooperation wanes in the mature stage. Lastly, declining clusters are clusters that have reached their peak and either fall into dissolution or may reinvent themselves into a new cluster following new innovation or investment (Jankowiak 2020). The process of progressing from one stage to another is not an abrupt jump, but a slow process of evolution over many years as economic factors change within the cluster (Ostapenko et al. 2022).

### 2.2.1 Embryonic stage

In the embryonic stage when clusters form, the presence of a hub or multiple hubs is usually established (Ye et al. 2020). This can happen from a historical event, owing to an isolated initiative or even by chance (Desmarchelier & Zhang 2018). Once an industry forms in a certain locality and forms its own ecosystem, that industry can be expected to stay in that location for a long period of time (Auerswald & Dani 2017). The creative business cluster known as the Nashville country music industry was created by the emergence of country music and the major record labels establishing offices in Nashville to take advantage of the genre, thus creating the hubs (Baker 2016). Smaller firms, recognising the competitive advantage of being located near the hub, will set up business in the same geographical area as the hub. These businesses, despite being competitors, will usually cooperate with each other for mutual advantage in supplying vital resources for the hub, or hubs. (Jankowiak 2020). As other similar businesses realise the benefits arising from locating near the hub, more businesses will relocate to find the same economic competitive advantages, essentially entering the growth stage of the cluster and adding to the profitability of the hub and the region where the business cluster is located (Jankowiak 2020).

### 2.2.2 Growth stage

Once a cluster is established, the local market experiences the growth stage as other businesses realise the competitive advantage of locating within the cluster and will relocate near the hub (Denney et al 2020). As growth occurs, organisations will develop close ties with one another while realising the benefits of cooperation (Jankowiak 2022: 5). Growing clusters tend to display social networks that are strong with abundant face-to-face interaction and cooperation between competitors displaying an element of mutual trust (Menzel & Fornahl 2010). Industry leaders will emerge in this stage, and standards and common business practices will emerge, exemplifying the cluster and its culture (Jankowiak 2022: 5). During this growth stage, there are very few barriers to entry, and new entries to the cluster increase with, as Jankowiak (2022: 5) described, almost an element of encouragement due to the attractiveness of the success of the cluster and welcoming participatory culture within the market. As clusters grow, the region where the cluster is located experiences infrastructure development to support the industry and bolsters the local economy, which creates an environment where local businesses can thrive (Menzel & Fornahl 2010).

### 2.2.3 Mature stage

Once business clusters reach the mature stage, growth can slow as barriers to entry may develop in the form of advantages that may arise for businesses not involved in the cluster (Menzel & Fornahl 2020). Disadvantages may also arise for those within the cluster that are locked into practices and methods of doing business that those outside of the cluster might view as costly or unnecessary (Menzel & Fornahl 2020). Large organisations, seeing the advantages of the cluster, may also seek to enter the market through acquisition (Cottineau & Arcaute 2020). These acquisitions can begin to slowly transform the market from many small entrepreneurial-type businesses to a small number of larger firms attempting to exert their control over the market (Cottineau & Arcaute 2020). Innovation and entrepreneurship will then tend to shift from businesses within the cluster to those outside the cluster (Menzel & Fornahl 2020).

### 2.2.4 Declining stage

Once a business cluster reaches the point where growth is stagnant and begins to lose members or cluster advantages, they enter the declining stage (Jankowiak 2020: 5). Characteristics of the declining stage are a lack of new knowledge flow, a lack of start-ups within the cluster, and companies within the cluster changing business models or leaving the cluster altogether (Jankowiak 2020: 5). The competitive advantages that organisations found in the past due to being a member of the cluster may become disadvantages as innovation declines and business practices become a disability instead of an advantage (Menzel & Fornahl 2010). This can happen when the competencies of a cluster evolve to a state where they are only held by a few companies (Menzel & Fornahl 2010). Additionally, another cause of decline is when large companies enter a cluster through acquisition by acquiring many of the successful smaller actors within the cluster, a phenomenon that can dampen the entrepreneurial spirit of the market (Cottineau & Arcaute 2020). A rise in acquisitions is a natural phenomenon when clusters become successful because large companies outside the cluster will find it attractive to try and buy their way into the cluster to take advantage of the cluster's advantages (Cottineau & Arcaute 2020). As the larger companies move in and gain the competencies and advantages that the cluster provides, the smaller companies tend to lose those advantages and the larger companies have been shown to cooperate less with competitors jeopardising the benefits of cluster membership for the smaller firms (Cottineau & Arcaute 2020). As a result, some companies may relocate to find new competitive advantages, which Ostapenko et al. (2022) described as delocalisation. The decline stage does not always mean the eventual disappearance of a cluster, however. Some industries become so ingrained in their community over time that relocation of the industry is not realistic. In those cases, the competencies and advantages of the cluster may evolve or disappear, but the industry will remain in the same geographical location for many years (Desmarchelier & Zhang 2018).

## 2.3 Nashville Music Industry

The 2013 music industry report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) classified Nashville, TN as a music city, which means that it has a history of music being made, community involvement with music, high-profile music events, and education centred around the music within the community (Baker 2016). The local economy receives over US\$5 billion from the music industry each year (Baker 2016). The Nashville music market is centred primarily around the country genre of music with the major record labels, Sony, Universal and Warner Brothers, all traditionally having offices in the area called Music Row dedicated to the creation and marketing of country music. Due to the presence of the major labels, other facets of the music industry have developed roots in the community, including publishers, songwriters, booking agents, producers, recording engineers, musicians, studios, managers and more. Each of the various facets work together for mutual benefit, supplying the needs of the major labels and the overall market. The city distinctly exemplifies what Romanova et al. (2019) described as a business cluster where businesses will locate together, and competitors will work together for mutual benefit. The market houses over 100 music publishers and over 200 studios, and sustains over 50,000 jobs. Most businesses have historically been located in a small area along 16th and 17th avenues called Music Row (Baker 2016). The opportunities that the presence of the major labels provides for workers within the market have created a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, which Lingo (2020) described as a characteristic of the Nashville music scene. The interdependencies within the market between the different types of work give workers the opportunity to become entrepreneurs and start their own small businesses based on their own expertise and enjoy the advantages gained by the presence of the major labels. The mystique and growth surrounding the

country music genre in the creative business cluster have helped Nashville become one of the fastest growing United States cities in recent years with an expected population growth from 1.7 million people in 2014 to 3 million by 2040 (Fausset 2014).

The music row area developed in the 1950s after producer Owen Bradley opened his Quonset Hut recording studio where many of the 1950s and 1960s country hits were recorded. As a result of the Quonset Hut and Bradley's success, other studios opened in the same area, and publishers and record labels began to set up shop along the 1-mile area of 16th and 17th avenues. This was the spawn of the clustering phenomenon in Nashville and the beginning of what became Music Row. From the 1950s through the 1970s, Music Row gained notoriety, and artists such as Bob Dylan and Elvis Presley all recorded in the area, making Nashville a mecca for recording music (White 2013). The proximity of businesses and workers on Music Row helped to create a campus-like environment where workers developed strong relationships with one another and helped lead to the camaraderie that Hodges (2022) described, which is still a quality that many in the Nashville market hold dear, up until today. It has traditionally been a small business community where most workers are acquainted with one another and see each other at lunch or in the local bars after work. Lingo (2020) described the entrepreneurial spirit and cooperation within the community as similar to what is usually a characteristic of successful business clusters. Music Row was even designated as a national treasure by the National Historic Trust for Preservation in 2015 (Fuston 2015). The creative business cluster and the country genre of music flourished from the 1960s to the turn of the century, when the digital age and the illegal downloading of music began to threaten the music business, not just in Nashville, but all over the world due to piracy and antiquated copyright laws. The enforcement of copyright laws dampened the threat of piracy, but technology quickly forced a need for the music business to evolve as consumers shifted to streaming over purchasing their music (Baskerville & Baskerville 2019: 251).

After the advent of streaming, music was not as prosperous as it once was, even though the Music Modernization Act (MMA) attempted to solidify the monetisation of music in the digital age (Charap et al. 2019). Royalties earned from a stream of a song were much less than from the sale of a song for record labels, publishers and songwriters (Charap et al. 2019). As a result, royalty earnings declined as consumers switched to streaming over the purchase of music. Businesses have had to look for new revenue sources or adjust their own business models to adapt. One form of adaptation has been a re-evaluation of whether locating a small business in the small bungalow-style houses is still an important resource. Many of the businesses located in old homes along historic Music Row dedicated to the country genre have had to relocate to less expensive areas of town, such as South Broadway and Berry Hill, to maintain their success (White 2013). Nashville Songwriters Association International head Bart Herbison claimed that in the early 2000s, he counted over 100 for-sale signs on Music Row at the beginning of what he described as a period of mass exodus (White 2013). In place of the small houses that once held studios, management offices and publishing companies, there are now high-rise condos and dentist offices (White 2013). Real estate agent and studio owner Larry Sheridan recalled five historic recording studios being torn down in 2012 to make room for the new condos (Fausset 2014). Of the three major record labels that used to all reside on Music Row, Warner Brothers is the only one that is still located in the area. Sony Records has moved to a newly developed area of Nashville called the gulch and Universal Music has moved into a high-rise building downtown, both in search of accommodations that better serve their resources (Fausset 2014).

## 2.4 Current Market Characteristics

### 2.4.1 Rise of streaming

The digital era has drastically changed business models and income sources within the overall music industry. The change occurred as new technologies have shifted music consumption patterns and how people listen to their favourite songs or artist (Towse 2017). Where royalties had traditionally come from the sale of physical products or performances of music through radio, television and concerts, in 2015, streaming music online became the largest source of music revenue in the world (Datta et al. 2018). Spilker & Colbjørnsen (2020) defined streaming as "the transmission and retrieval of digital content that is stored and processed on a remote server" (para. 2). A major reason why consumers have shifted to streaming is due to the ease of discovering new artists and music (Datta et al. 2018). Before streaming, consumers had to go to the record store or iTunes to purchase music. Post streaming, consumers can now subscribe to a service and pay a monthly fee to listen to any music they desire.

The average cost of around US\$10/month is more economical than having to purchase every product individually (Datta et al. 2018). By 2017, the streaming industry leader Spotify had amassed 100 million customers in 60 countries, with those numbers increasing each year (Datta et al. 2018). In Spotify's home country, 80% of music revenues are accounted to streaming (Spilker & Colbjørnsen 2020).

The rise of streaming has allowed large firms to see the advantage of acquiring small firms to increase their market share and take advantage of the rising revenue from digital sources (Towse 2017). Attendant with the change in consumer behaviour in terms of the main mode of music consumption having shifted to online streaming since the beginning of the second decade of the present century, laws have been enacted to raise streaming rates for publishers and songwriters. The recent passing of the MMA in the United States was an attempt to bring the country's copyright laws into the current era and account for the new technologies that the previous laws overlooked (Charap et al. 2019). The MMA was passed by the US Congress and then signed into law by President Donald Trump on 11 October 2019 (Charap et al. 2019). In terms of streaming, the law requires the copyright royalty board to adjust streaming rates on a "willing buyer" and "willing seller" basis, which raised rates by 40% over the 5 years following the passage of the law (Charap et al. 2019, para. 14). This revenue increase makes music companies an appealing target for acquisition and large companies finding competitive advantages. As a result, business clusters such as Nashville, that have a high number of small successful companies, are seeing an increase in large firms seeking to profit from the rising royalty rates and increased consumer demand entering the market through acquisition (Towse 2017).

#### **2.4.2 Shifting market culture**

As stated in an earlier section, two of the three major labels that once served as hubs for the Nashville creative business cluster have relocated from Music Row to other areas (Fausset 2014). The major labels are not alone in relocating their businesses. Hodges (2021) described the changes within the Nashville market that are occurring through acquisition, which include changes in culture, changes in the benefits of the cluster, increased siloing of companies and less cooperation between entities. The study looked at the increase of international acquisition within the Nashville publishing market and the resulting effects through extensive research on what has caused the acquisition increase by interviewing professionals in the community who have experienced their firm being acquired by an international firm (Hodges 2021). Each interviewee had worked for a small independent company that an international firm had acquired. Sixteen one-on-one personal interviews were conducted where participants recounted how the acquisition affected their opportunities, career and morale. The accounts of participant experiences revealed changes in culture and cooperation within the market along with recent changes in market structure (Hodges 2021).

Hodges' (2021) qualitative study on the effects of international acquisitions uncovered some characteristics that the Nashville market has traditionally displayed and how those characteristics are changing due to the rise of acquisitions within the creative business cluster. First, the market has traditionally displayed a cooperative family-style environment. Workers have tended to cooperate with their competitors for mutual benefit, similar to what Menzel & Fornahl (2010) described as a characteristic of business clusters in the growth phase of their lifecycle. The small community on Music Row was a place where many were acquainted, and workers even ran in the same social circles. A word that some interviewees in Hodges' (2021) study used was camaraderie. Filo et al. (2009) explained camaraderie as a sense of being a part of something bigger than yourself, or a feeling of obligation to others. One participant even described Nashville, traditionally, as a place where a handshake matters, and personal interaction is prevalent between organisations (Hodges 2021). This description also exemplifies Menzel & Fornahl's (2010) description of the growth phase characteristics of personal relationships and handshake-style business.

The results of Hodges' (2021) study showed that the increase in acquisitions is affecting the traditional culture of the creative business cluster. Participants described the international firms as being secretive and keeping business in-house instead of cooperating with competitors. International firms were also perceived as not understanding the politics of the industry and the family feel of the industry. International firms did not seem to care about upsetting the norms and thought that money could buy their way to success. Workers realised that the international firms, even though there was a perceived increase in opportunity, did not really have an interest in tradition and only cared about the bottom line (Hodges 2021). The focus on the importance of cooperation with

other entities was diminished. This view that the participants held was congruent with what Towse (2017) described as music acquisitions being primarily about increasing market share and profit. Analysis of the respondents' answers in the study of Hodges (2021) indicates that the participants all preferred the incumbent traditional culture prevailing as a characteristic of the Nashville country music market, incorporating the advantageous features of small company feel and camaraderie, vis-à-vis the newer large international firms' bottom-line, result-driven approaches.

### 3. Findings on Music Row's Lifecycle Stage

The examination of the literature on business cluster lifecycle stages and then comparing the characteristics of each stage to the literature on the current characteristics of the Nashville creative business cluster revealed a solid perspective on the current lifecycle stage of Music Row. First, one can rule out the embryonic stage, as Nashville's Music Row cluster has been in existence since the 1950s (White 2013). The area is well-established and has been entrenched in the local economy for many years. Second, the growth stage could be ruled out. The area experienced exponential growth from the 1960s through the 1990s as the benefits and competencies the cluster provided enticed small businesses to set up shop and allowed entrepreneurship to flourish (Baker 2016). The common business practices that usually emerge in the growth stage have been in place for many years (Jankowiak 2022). The technology shift of the music business to streaming has helped to slow the industry's growth and is forcing businesses to adapt and find ways to save resources.

When looking at the Nashville market in comparison to the characteristics of the mature stage, some similarities begin to emerge. The successful history of the market has spurred the government to deem Music Row as a national treasure (Fuston 2015). As a result, real estate and rental prices along 16th and 17th avenues have risen exponentially in recent years, making it unaffordable for small companies to remain in the Music Row area. This characteristic is what Menzel & Fornahl (2020) described when they mentioned the high likelihood of rising establishment costs serving as an important reason why businesses trying to remain in the cluster, and doing business as they have traditionally been doing always, may find it too costly to remain, causing them to relocate outside of the area. The competencies and benefits of being located on Music Row seem to be disappearing and benefits are improving for those outside of the cluster.

Of the four lifecycle stages that Denney et al. (2020) outlined, the Nashville creative business cluster centred around Music Row shares the most characteristics with a declining stage. Jankowiak (2020) explained that when clusters start to lose members and the advantages of being a member start to dissipate, a cluster is exemplifying its declining stage. Recent events reveal that Nashville's Music Row now exhibits the loss of the advantage of being capable of offering to small music companies a home that is located on 16th and 17th avenues. The relocation of two of the three major labels to other areas of Nashville, as well as the small houses along Music Row being torn down and turned into high-rise condos, shows what Jankowiak (2020) described as the delocalisation that occurs in the declining lifecycle stage (White 2013). Another phenomenon described by Hodges (2021) was that many of the small companies within the creative business cluster have been purchased by large firms because of the attractiveness of the advantages of the market and rise in streaming revenues (Cottineau & Arcaute 2020). These large firms are cooperating less with competitors and using their resources to keep business within their own walls. As a result, larger firms are controlling and changing many of the ways in which business has been traditionally conducted within the market. In essence, in trying to take advantage of the core competencies of the market, large firms are eliminating some of those advantages. With fewer players controlling the competencies of the cluster, the benefits for all members seem to be dwindling (Menzel & Fornahl 2010). Delocalisation similar to what Ostapenko et al. (2022) described has become prevalent as companies are having to seek the competitive advantage of relocating to less expensive areas of town. This relocation and disbursement of company offices has been seriously detrimental to the benefits for members, such as cooperation between competitors and daily personal interaction within the market, and additionally has resulted in the loss of the family-style environment; all these characteristics were well-documented by the participants in Hodges' (2021) study as slowly disappearing from Music Row. Workers no longer see their competitors at lunch in the local restaurant or after work at the bar, because their businesses are now located in different parts of the city.

## 4. Limitations

Keightley et al. (2012) stressed that researchers must always examine the limitations or potential weaknesses of their research. There is very little past research on the recent changes in the Nashville Music Row creative business cluster. As a result, the conclusions outlined in this paper must rely heavily on Hodges' (2021) research derived from interviews with workers within the market as well as recent news articles on changes within the market. The present researcher is also a veteran of the Nashville music community and has a career of over 30 years working within the creative business cluster. To combat the increased likelihood of researcher bias and arriving at conclusions from his own experience, the researcher relied on the literature and accounts of workers within the market and bracketed out, or separated, his own bias from the findings.

## 5. Conclusion

Technology can serve as a catalyst for change within an organisation or industry, as new and more efficient ways of doing business are invented (Bruzzone & Crevani 2022). It is evident that the invention of music streaming has changed how the public consumes their favourite artist or song (Datta et al. 2018). As streaming has become the means by which most consumers listen to music, music companies have been forced to shift business models to account for the new technology (Towse 2017). A new copyright law, in the form of the MMA, was implemented to account for the new technology, which has raised the profitability of music companies and made small successful small independent companies an enticing target for acquisition. As a result, large firms have increasingly been entering the Nashville Music Row creative business cluster through acquisition. The smaller companies are slowly disappearing from Music Row resultant to either acquisition or leaving for the economic reason of high real estate and rental prices. The cooperation and family-style culture of the market that was once prevalent is fading away as the large corporations are controlling more of the market's resources. The effects of the change have caused Music Row to enter the declining stage of its lifecycle. Many of the advantages of being located on 16th and 17th avenues have disappeared along with opportunities for new start-ups and small businesses.

It is important to note that, as Denney et al. (2020) explained, the structure and characteristics of business clusters evolve slowly over time. The fact that Nashville's Music Row has entered the declining stage of its lifecycle does not mean that it will disappear in the near future. Ostapenko et al. (2020) explained that cluster evolution is a slow process and happens over many years. Some of the advantages and competencies have been lost and the market has begun the natural process of entering the declining stage of its lifecycle. Ostapenko et al. (2020) explained that clusters will either disappear, relocate or evolve in the declining stage. Nashville currently displays the qualities of evolving, similar to what Jankowiak (2020) explained, and is in the process of reinventing itself as a result of streaming's effect on the core competencies of the market. The core competencies of the market will not be regained. Instead, companies will continue to adjust their strategies to focus inwards, resulting in less cooperation with competitors. Even though many businesses may not choose to locate on 16th and 17th avenues, as companies have done historically, due to the loss of the competitive advantages associated with the location, Nashville, as a city, is still the home of country music and the major labels dedicated to the genre. That fact is not soon to change. Country music is part of the city's identity and generates over US\$5 billion for the Nashville local economy each year (Baker, 2016). The major labels still need songs, artists, producers, studios, managers, recording engineers and other specialised careers in music to produce and release their products. The city should remain country music's capital for many years to come; however, the various facets of the industry, in an effort to remain competitive, will continue to relocate throughout the city to less expensive areas instead of setting up their business on Music Row. This is a natural reaction as a market enters its decline and should continue to occur in the future (Ostapenko et al., 2020).



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