

Clusters as Systemic Change Agents in the Italian Textile Industry: Navigating Digitalization and Sustainability Transitions

Hana El Toqi, Amine Abi Aad, Dr. Fernando G. Alberti, Dr. Massimo Riva

LIUC Carlo Cattaneo, Italy

Abstract

This study explores how cluster organizations in the Italian textile industry act as systemic change agents in navigating the dual transitions of digitalization and sustainability. Drawing on qualitative data from clusters in Prato, Biella, and Como, the research employs a multi-theoretical framework combining UTAUT, Institutional Theory, Dynamic Capabilities, and Cluster Theory. The findings highlight the role of cluster organizations in shaping performance expectations, reducing complexity, fostering peer influence, and coordinating enabling conditions. These organizations emerge not merely as intermediaries but as strategic actors facilitating collective adaptation to technological and environmental pressures. By extending UTAUT to the meso level and integrating it with systemic transformation theories, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how innovation diffusion occurs in traditional industries. It also offers practical insights into how institutional and collaborative infrastructures can enhance resilience, competitiveness, and sustainability in regional production systems.

Keywords: cluster organizations; digital transformation; sustainability transitions; utaut; institutional theory; innovation adoption; regional development