

Territorial Governance and Promotion of Local Tourism the Challenge of Municipal Investments in Seguela (Côte D'ivoire)

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ABSTRACT

In Côte d'Ivoire since 1980, decentralization has encouraged citizen participation in the implementation of local projects to facilitate the emergence of income-generating activities and additional foreign exchange. In France, as in Spain, Quebec, and Morocco, some decentralized communities have developed sustainable local tourism by investing in enhancing local heritage to boost local development. In the image of these decentralized communities, what investments have local elected officials made to promote the Ivorian destination in these communities in the face of dwindling financial resources? The objective is to show that local elected officials have made investments to develop local tourism in Seguela. The methodological approach is based on an empirical approach, supported by field observation, semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire sent to 200 heads of households in neighborhoods selected from a reasoned choice, and documentation. The result reveals that municipal investments such as the opening of roads, improvement of hydraulics, electrification, creation of public spaces of attraction, cleaning of gutters, cleaning of streets, and the establishment of the cultural festival have had little impact on local tourism. This emphasizes the necessity for elected officials to adopt a collaborative approach based on territorial marketing to promote local tourism in Seguela.

Keywords: Municipal investments, valorization, Seguela, territorial marketing, local tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Decentralization has been at the heart of local development policies in Côte d'Ivoire since 1980. It should enable local elected officials to implement social mobilization strategies, to provide a framework for local democracy, and to create community facilities. These achievements and investments should facilitate the emergence of income-generating activities and foreign exchange to boost local development (A. A. Adomon, T. Gogbé and K. L. Atta, 2017). As such, decentralization encourages citizen participation, territorial social innovation, and experimentation with local solutions that can influence and transform national frameworks (R. Rugeiyamu and A. Msendo, 2025).

In France, for example, tourism has become a powerful lever for the economic, social and environmental revitalization of territories. Decentralized communities have been able to develop sustainable and local tourism by investing in the enhancement of heritage and the development of adapted infrastructure, so much so that in 2023, out of a total of 90 million international tourists, a growing share is moving towards locally anchored offers (Atout France, Tourism Memento (2024). This is also the case in most North African countries where decentralization has been the spearhead in mobilizing local human and financial resources to develop local tourism, particularly in Morocco (B. Oulhaj and B. Bouali. (2016) and (A. Mohamed and A. B. Abdelhamid, 2022), etc.

On the other hand, in Côte d'Ivoire, the literature is almost silent on the promotion of local tourism through the actions initiated by local elected officials. The few actions taken by municipalities in this area remain unknown (K. A. Kouadio, 2021). While Law No. 2003-208 of 7 July 2003 on the transfer and distribution of competences from the State to local authorities gives the possibility to decentralized authorities to mobilize and enhance local assets in order to boost the local economy. According to the said law: "the creation, equipment and management of tourist sites and tourism promotion infrastructures are the responsibility of the municipality at the municipal

METHODOLOGY

Established as a full-fledged commune by Law n°. 78-07 of January 9, 1978, Seguela, our field of investigation is located in the Worodougou region in the northwest of Côte d'Ivoire, precisely in the department of Seguela and belongs to a vegetation transition zone (forest-savannah) sparse from south to north. This department covers an area of 6602 Km² where 298,384 souls live (Anstat /RGPH-2021). This department is subdivided into eight (8) sub-prefectures: Seguela, Kani, Djibrosso, Sifie, Marondo, Massala, Worofla, all in full municipality. Among these, the commune (Figure 1: study map) with a population of 73989 inhabitants [(Anstat /RGPH-2021), offers a tourist diversity that arouses the curiosity of many tourists, including the great mosque of Seguela, etc.

[illegible]

In an empirical approach, we conducted field observation, conducted direct and semi-direct interviews and finally carried out a field survey in the following neighborhoods (Table 1). In addition, there is documentary research.

Neighborhoods		Population by site	Sample
RYMER 2	Urban area	9449	103
DIOMANDE	Urban area	7689	84
TRAORE	Urban area	6310	69
BATESTI	Urban area	6219	65
RIMER 1	Urban area	5027	53



BENA EXTENTION	Rural area	694	8
TOTAL		34694	382

Source: (Anstat /RGPH-2021)

The observation took place from February 27, 2025 to March 25, 2025 and made it possible to identify the types and forms of tourist activities, their dynamism and their impact on municipal development.

As for the interviews with resource persons (head of the technical department of the town hall, head of finance of the town hall, head of socio-cultural services), they were carried out from 02 to 04 March 2025 with an interview guide. We also spoke with the director of the local Anstat on March 10, 2025 to obtain statistical data on the population of the neighborhoods surveyed, as shown in Table 1.

The questionnaire survey which took place from February 27, 2025 to March 25, 2025 concerned heads of households. But among them were actors in the tourism sector who were heads of households. This made it possible to have information to assess the scope of the actions undertaken by the municipal authorities in the tourism sector. Thus, 200 managers interviewed were distributed in neighborhoods as shown in Table 1. This figure was obtained from the calculation made on the basis of Schwartz's formula:

$$(1) \quad n = \frac{(tp)^2 \times p(1-p) \times N}{(tp)^2 \times p(1-p) + (N-1) \times y^2}$$

(2) n: sample size

(3) N: Size of the target population (number of households)

(4) p: Expected proportion of a population response or actual serving size

(5) tp: Sampling confidence interval 95 % or 1.96

(6) y²: margin of sampling error 5 % or 0.05

This gives 382 heads of household as the sample size. However, given the realities on the ground, the difficulties in mobilizing resources and especially the limited time, we proceeded by reasoned choice to distribute our sample in certain neighborhoods (Table 1) according to the following criteria: to reside for at least 10 years in the municipality, to be at least 25 years old, to be a regular financial support for the family. And above all, to live in neighborhoods with a population $\geq$ to 3000 inhabitants in urban areas and $\geq$ to 300 inhabitants in rural areas. In addition, the survey had to carry out a renumerative activity on the municipal territory for at least 5 years.

The analysis of the documentation was based on the initial administrative accounts and budgets (2019, 2020, 2021, 2023) and the three-year program 2023-2024-2025 of the municipality of Séguéla and the writings of authors listed in the reference section. This made it possible to compare the primary data collected.

The processing of these data is based on the inventory of investments made by the municipality in the tourism sector and their impact on the dynamics of local development in Seguela.

RESULTS

Municipal investments made to promote local tourism

Actions to open up roads and improve various networks undertaken by the municipality

Investments made in the field of road infrastructure (Table 2) provide easy access and a fluid movement of people and goods in the municipality of Seguela.

Table 2: Overview of municipal investments in roads in CFA francs

Municipal actions	Anticipated amounts (CFA francs)	Amounts invested CFA francs)	Completion dates
Addressing intersections and avenues	8 000 000	-	2019
Opening of the streets of the Rymer 4 and Bakayoko 2 districts extension	21 000 000	21 000 000	2019
Construction of ten (10) speed bumps in the municipality		2 000 000	2019
Opening of the streets of the new subdivision districts rymer 4 and Bakayoko 2 extension	7 219 000	5 511 060	2020
Addressing of the streets of the commune: triumphal arch at the entrance to the city of Séguéla by Touba and the entrance to the city of Seguela	17 000 000	-	2023
Opening of the streets of the new subdivided neighborhoods of Seguela (Mankono2, Fizanigoro, BAD)	17 000 000	-	2023
Total	70 219 000	9 611 060	

Source: Administrative accounts and initial budgets of the mayor of Seguela (2019-2023).

It appears from Table 2 that from 2019 and 2020, investments worth 21,000,000 FCFA and 5,511,060 FCFA were invested in the opening of the streets of the new Rymer 4 and Bakayoko 2 extension districts by the municipality (Photo 1).

Photograph 1: A distant view of the road leading to the neighbourhoods

Rymer 4 and Bakayoko 2 expansion



Cliche: Kone Mariam (2025)

These actions of repaving and addressing roads will facilitate mobility as part of the promotion of local tourism. We are witnessing the emergence of a mode of public transport provided by machines called "saloni", mini-coaches "mansa", etc. which serve the districts of the municipality. All the actors (transporters) pay taxes to the town hall depending on the machines.

Actions to improve the supply of drinking water and the electrification of the municipal territory

The municipality of Séguéla has benefited from the general electrification program of the 19 neighborhoods of its surrounding villages. This has been possible thanks to the various electrification projects as part of the 2020 emergence policy initiated by the State. These projects were led by the various mayors whose task was entrusted to the CIE also based in Séguéla. As for the supply of drinking water, the YANI dam, which served as a source of supply for SODECI, was attached to the Sassandra River to reduce water shortages frequently in the 19 districts of the city and some surrounding villages (Bemasso, Bena, etc.) in 2025.

Sanitation and sanitation actions through the cleaning of gutters and street sweeping promoted by the municipality

As part of the protection of the environment, the technical department of the town hall is committed to the maintenance of the main roads of the municipality. Thus, in 2019, 200 garbage cans were made for a value of 1,815,000 FCFA in order to reduce the illegal dumping of household waste in residential areas or near entertainment areas. In addition, the agents of the technical services of the town hall devote themselves every three days a week to cleaning the major asphalt roads in the municipal perimeter as illustrated in photo 2 below.

Photograph 2: Gutter cleaning agents and Cleaning in the middle of the job



Cliche: Kone Mariam (2025)

Actions carried out by the municipality in favour of public attraction and tourist areas

Among the achievements in the socio-economic field, there are important actions in the field of real estate, particularly in the rehabilitation and redevelopment work (Table 3).

Table 3: Municipal investments in the socio-cultural and leisure fields between 2019 and 2023 in CFA francs

Municipal actions	Anticipated amounts (CFA francs)	Amount invested (CFA francs)	Completion dates
Construction of a fourth public garden	5 000 000	5 000 000	2019

Real estate equipment of the municipal hostel	7 000 000	6 973 400	2019
Construction of a fourth public garden	5 636 000	5 636 000	2020
Construction of a VIP reception hangar	25 000 000	14 904 265	2021
Rehabilitation of the Seguela cultural centre	61 036 000	30 627 870	2021
Construction of the fence of the Oxygène de Seguela public garden, length 343 m	19 472 000	18 995 544	2023
Construction of a 200-place market in the Diomandé district, extension	1 973 000	-	2023
Rehabilitation of an eight (8) room building at the municipal hostel	35 287 000	35 287 000	Three-year program: 2023
Development of two (2) playgrounds in the residential and administrative center of Seguela	10 938 000	10 938 000	2020
Stadiums, sports fields, playgrounds, swimming pools	49 407 000	12 143 210	2023
Construction of the fence of two playgrounds in the residential area and administrative center of Seguela (length: 305.40 m; height 2.2 m	25 832 000	-	2023
Total	252 581 000	146 505 289	

Administrative accounts and initial budgets of the town hall from 2019 to 2023 and the programme (2023 to 2024).

Table 3 reveals that the amount of 35 287 000 CFA francs was invested in the rehabilitation of an eight (8) room building at the municipal hostel with a view to welcoming potential tourists. The same is true for the rehabilitation of the cultural center of Seguela (photo 3) for a value of 30 627 870 CFA francs.

Photograph 3: A view of the main entrance of the Madégbê Cultural Centre in Seguela



Cliche: Kone Mariam (2025)

Regarding the development of playgrounds and leisure areas, the municipality has invested a total amount of 23,081,210 CFA francs to develop the stadium, sports fields, playgrounds, and the municipal swimming pool and especially to build the fence of two playgrounds in the residential area as illustrated in photo 4

Photograph 4: From afar the fence of the public garden oxygenates the neighborhood Residential. Landscape lovers can be seen walking



Cliché: Koné Mariam (2025)

Our investigations have revealed that these developments and redevelopments are part of the preparations for the 2023 CAN in order to welcome visitors or possible tourists coming for the festivities of this football event in Korhogo. The poll also revealed that 74 % of respondents gave a favourable opinion for the municipality's actions in the field of tourism, compared to 8 % who expressed their disapproval. As for the remaining 18 %, they felt that they were not interested in the actions of the town hall in this field of tourism. Faced with such reactions from all sides, one would be tempted to wonder about the scope of municipal actions in the tourism sector in Seguela?

The actors involved in the promotion of local tourism in Seguela

Law n°. 2003-208 of 8 July 2003 on the transfer and distribution of State competences and Ordinance No. 2011-262 of 28 September 2011 on the orientation of the general organisation of the State Territorial Administration, determine the competences of the municipality in the field of tourism in the context of decentralisation. The analysis of the said documents gives a glimpse of different types of actors in the tourism sectors. These include:

Public actors and local institutions

The public actors and local institutions that participate in the revitalization of tourism in Séguéla include: The municipal authorities, in collaboration with the decentralized services of the State. If the municipal authorities, through their interventions, participate in the emergence of tourist activities on the municipal perimeter; the decentralised services of the State (Photo 5) are involved in the promotion of local tourism through compliance with the legislative framework and strategic planning.

Photograph 5: A view of the entrance façade of the directorate Ministry of Tourism and Leisure of Woroudougou



Cliche: Kone Mariam (2025)

As such, they draw up development plans aimed at enhancing the local heritage while promoting sustainable economic growth. These actors ensure coordination by facilitating the synergy of tourism initiatives and the deployment of policies adapted to the local reality. These institutions also have a mediating role between public and private actors in the implementation of concerted projects; by offering information, promotion and support services for local operators.

Private companies and operators

As key players in value creation, private companies and operators are the driving force behind the tourism offer. The dynamics of these players are based on their ability to adapt to the constraints of the local market. Their area of involvement encompasses various sectors, including accommodation, catering, travel agencies, as well as leisure and ecotourism activities. These private operators collaborate with other local actors, such as public actors and communities, for the creation of jobs and local economic dynamism throughout the municipality. Indeed, the data provided by the regional tourism directorate reveal that Seguela is full of a large number of hotel receptives (Table 4).

Table 4: Spatial distribution of hotel receptives in the worodougou

Urban centres de worodougou	Number of hotel receptives	Number of rooms	Number beds	Jobs
Seguela	17	271	542	77
Sifie	1	7	14	1
Worofla	1	8	16	1
Kani	2	24	48	8
Morondo	1	10	20	2
Total	21	320	640	89

Source: Regional Directorate of Tourism of Seguela, 2023



As shown in Table 4, hotel receptives offer a multiplicity of jobs. Séguéla is in first place with 77 direct and indirect jobs, or 86.52 % of a total of 89 jobs created by the tourism sector in the region in 2023.

Communities and local associations

Local communities and associations participate in the safeguarding of cultural heritage, the development of natural resources and above all in the animation of economic activities related to tourism. They help organize events, festivals and participate in traditional markets. This makes it possible to strengthen the promotion of local identity among visitors. These community groups are an essential lever for the promotion of local tourism and local economic and cultural empowerment. Their dynamism and commitment make it possible to create synergy with other players in the tourism sector. Without their support, initiatives can meet with resistance and even conflict.

Populations and tourists or visitors

Local people usually serve as informal guides, artisans, and participatory actors in local events or community initiatives. Our investigations reveal that out of the 200 interviewees, 118 men, unlike 82 women, are involved in tourist activities in Seguela. The latter play an important role in raising awareness, promoting responsible tourism, and sometimes even in the direct management of certain sites. As for tourists, they are people to whom the offer is addressed. Their main role is to consume the proposed tourist offer. They can also influence supply through changes in demand.

The effects of municipal investments on the dynamics of improving local tourism in Seguela

The establishment of an annual cultural festival called "Worodougou Lôgôba"

Les actions municipales dans le tourisme culturel local sont perceptibles à travers l'organisation des festivals, des expositions et événements dédiés à la valorisation des richesses économiques. Cet événement, qui a eu lieu du 18 au 21 avril 2025 au centre culturel Madegbê, a rassemblé des acteurs du monde économique, des artisans, des entrepreneurs et surtout des décideurs politiques lors de la conférence de la chambre consulaire africaine et francophone (CPCAF) à la 3^e édition du « Worodougou Lôgôba », mais il demeure peu attrayant en raison d'un manque de stratégie de communication dans la localité.

Local tourism, an under-exploited sector that provides jobs

Data provided by the Seguela Regional Directorate of Tourism in 2023 reveal that the commune of Seguela is full of a significant number of incoming hotels in the Worodougou region, as shown in Table 4. As can be seen in Table 4, these hotel receptives offer direct and indirect jobs in Seguela, or. 86.52 % of a total of 89 jobs generated in the tourism sector in 2023 in the region. Our investigations revealed that tourism is a sector that promotes job creation through various related activities (trade, transport, catering, hotels, informal guides, maintenance and cleaning agents, event actors, craftsmen, nightclubs, etc.) according to all the actors concerned (local institutions, private companies and operators, local communities and associations, populations, etc.). Here too, the seasonal nature of tourists makes these jobs non-permanent.

The emergence of new means of serving uncontrolled tourist sites in Seguela

Several types of transport contribute to the mobility of residents and visitors in this locality. These are the two-wheeled (motorcycle taxi) or three-wheeled (tricycle) vehicles called Saloni (Photo 6).

Photograph 6: "Saloni" parked waiting for possible passengers



Cliche: Kone Mariam (2025)

These mobility devices offer their service for a fixed uniform rate of 200 CFA francs. However, exceptions may be imposed by drivers if the journey to be covered is considered long. In addition to motorcycle taxis and tricycles, mobility is provided by minibuses called "massa" to serve the municipal perimeter and buses that connect Abidjan to Seguela via Korhogo and vice versa. Like other activities, the operation of taxis is subject to an operating permit issued by the town hall. This creates a quarterly declaration that is perceived as a flat-rate tax. This activity also offers direct and indirect jobs to young people who have dropped out of school without a diploma. It is necessary to train these young people who have dropped out of school without a diploma in the transport profession.

A degraded living environment polluted by illegal dumping of rubbish despite the actions taken by the

Although actions have been carried out by the municipality in the field of VRD (roads-networks-divers), the roads are still in an advanced state of degradation in the districts of Rimer 1 and Diomande. On the other hand, we observed an increased presence of household waste littering the streets and alleys (Photo 7) in the Batesti, Diomande, Rimer 1 and in the village of Bena.

Photograph 7: Illegal dumping of garbage on a road in the Diomande district



Cliche : Kone Mariam (2025)

These illegal dumping of garbage have a negative impact on the attractiveness of tourism in the municipality because more than 70 % of tourist activities are concentrated in these above-mentioned districts.

Marketing of local products and handicrafts at the single market

The large market (Photo 8) is the place where everyone gathers to sell the various local products to the population and tourists. Trade is a dynamic sector supported by the sale of agricultural products such as rice, yams on market days in Seguela; when visitors purchase them at affordable costs, as shown in Photo 8.

Photograph 8 : Market day animated by the presence of vendors who have exhibited their agricultural products and customers transported by a "saloni"



Cliche : Kone Mariam (2025)

This activity is a real source of income for the inhabitants. Apart from the sale of agricultural products, there are exhibitions and the sale of works of art in the markets of the districts. This is the case, for example, every Tuesday in the Diomande extension district near the bus station. At the market, several types of art objects, such as traditional clothes, lace, jewelry and canary pots, are on display during the periods of June, July and August, when the tourist visits are intense.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The objective of this study was to show that the municipal investments made by local elected officials have an impact on the promotion of local tourism and local development in Séguéla. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, tourism, which was considered an "incidental, even useless, and inopportune" economic activity (M. H. Flatrès, 1972), now appears to be a lever for economic growth and social cohesion (N. K. Kouassi, 2025). Since 2014, the actors of the tourism sector have been trying to reposition it, even if the objectives set by the new Ivorian tourism code (Law No. 2014-139 of 24 March 2014, on the Tourism Code) are still far from being a reality. As our results in this study indicate. In contrast, in Quebec, Indigenous or local tourism creates 3500 jobs and generates \$169 million in economic benefits per year (N. Bonin (2018). In France too, the presence of tourist activities promotes the revitalization of decentralized territories, through the revaluation of shops, the restoration of old buildings or the development of local farmers' markets in rural areas (Atout France, Tourism Memento (2024). According to this source, tourism contributes to the maintenance of local services and offers farmers and craftsmen new sources of income through hospitality and direct sales in France.

Our results reveal that the local economy is supported by tourism activities in Séguéla. These activities allow local authorities to capitalize additional foreign exchange, allowing them to develop the municipal budget according to their priorities. These results are consistent with the work conducted by (M. Samson and T. Tegegne

(2023). Nevertheless, it should be noted that local tourism in Côte d'Ivoire is struggling to produce the same effects as in Quebec (N. Bonin (2018) and France (Atout France, Tourism Memento (2024)). We therefore propose territorial marketing as a tool to promote local tourism in Seguela.

Indeed, territorial marketing is the set of strategies and actions aimed at enhancing and promoting a territory in order to strengthen its attractiveness, notoriety and competitiveness (S. Mayol, 2022); (B. Benbba, S. Marso and al., 2025) and (B. Jugurta et D. M. Akli, 2024). It is "the art of positioning a territory on the vast world market" like a registered trademark, thanks to adapted communication tools. Literature, in this regard, abounds and is multifaceted depending on whether one is in a field. This systemic approach makes it possible to go beyond the logic of competition to favour complementarity and the pooling of forces. According to (S. Mayol, 2022), territorial marketing is based on three essential steps:

– **UNDERSTAND:** How to present the expectations of the territory and formulate the request to the target and to the "potential customers"? In other words, what are the modes of access to the activity to better target them? That is to say, to make a territorial diagnosis.

– **TAKE ACTION:** Communicate on potential assets using traditional means of communication reinforced by the internet in order to facilitate the expression of the offer. This communication should promote a collaborative "meeting" of the actors of the tourism sector.

In reality, the communication approach is dependent on the technological sphere embodied by social networks, which are not only a tool for disseminating information, but also participatory and interactive platforms where all Internet users (citizens, tourists and investors, etc.) exchange and share on their territory through social networks that make it possible to identify, make known, communicate and promote the image of their country (S. Sara, H. Jihane and A. Allal, 2023).

- **IMPLEMENTATION:** The marketing of the territory's assets must take into account the actors involved in the promotion of tourism through a public-private and win-win partnership between the actors concerned. These are populations and tourists, local communities and associations, private companies and operators, public actors and local institutions. This approach is based on three fundamentals:
 - The co-creation of differentiating tourist offers,
 - A fair distribution of economic benefits on the territory,
 - And responsible management of natural and heritage resources.

As can be seen, by mobilizing targeted communication tools and promoting the specific assets of the territory, territorial marketing helps to attract new investments, build loyalty among the local population and promote the emergence of local businesses (E. Khanfar and H. AZouaoui, 2022). However, the effectiveness of actions remains dependent on collaborative governance and the active involvement of local actors.

CONCLUSION

What investments have been made by local elected officials to promote the Ivorian destination in decentralized communities in the face of their dwindling financial resources? Our results have attempted to show that municipal investments have encouraged the emergence of several tourist activities on the municipal territory of Seguela. In particular, in the field of local job creation in the restaurant and hotel industry; the revaluation of local trade through the sale of works of art and local products; in the field of transport with the appearance of a new mode of transport "Saloni"; etc. Notwithstanding these achievements, local tourism is struggling to take off, due to a lack of financial resources but above all because of the lack of concerted action between the actors of the tourism sector. However, the municipality of Seguela has a cultural, historical and environmental heritage that needs to be enhanced. Territorial marketing would be an appropriate approach to promote the specific assets of the territory. This would attract new investors, build loyalty among the local population and encourage the

emergence of new establishments by inviting local players in the tourism sector to promote a coherent and attractive image of the municipality.

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