

# Strategic Framework for Developing Gemstone Tourism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Selected Mining Areas in Oke Ogun, Oyo State

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## Abstract

The study examines a strategic framework for gemstone tourism development in Oke Ogun, Oyo State, Nigeria, aiming to position the area as a global gemstone tourism destination while enhancing sustainability and local enterprise. A descriptive survey of 434 participants, including government officials, miners, craftsmen, tourists, heritage specialists, and community leaders from Itasa, Offiki, and Komu, was conducted using structured questionnaires, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that 55% of respondents believe the area's gemstone resources can attract international tourists, with 50.5% supporting government promotion. A significant 43.8% agree on enhancing global reputation, and 30% support collaboration with international organizations. Cultural heritage is viewed as complementary (59.9% agreement), yet opinions on job creation and local enterprise boost remain mixed. The challenges include poor infrastructure and marketing; recommended actions emphasize sustainability, community empowerment, and branding to enhance tourism.

**Keywords:** *Community development, Cultural heritage, Gemstone tourism, Strategic framework, Sustainable*

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## **Background to the Study**

Tourism, as a major industry in the world, is now taking on a new dimension: gemstone tourism (Akintade & Ogunlade, 2024). Why are we talking about gemstone tourism? First, the current world economic crisis and the stigmatization of the gemstone industry as a promoter of conflict, along with cutting funding for the development of sustainable alternative livelihoods for artisan miners, have severely affected the industry value chain and the people who directly depend on the trade for their survival (Musah, 2025). The governments of Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, rely heavily on mineral resources (Hlavová, 2017). This scenario is the same for the Nigerian mineral industry in general and the Oyo State mineral industry in particular.

Gemstone tourism combines the attraction of travel with the excitement of gemstone mining and processing (Liccardo et al., 2020). Nigeria, with its abundant deposits of gemstones such as sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and tourmalines, stands to benefit immensely from developing this niche tourism sector (Olade, 2021). Oyo, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Bauchi are among the states in Nigeria that have gemstone reserves. Despite this wealth, the gemstone sector remains underdeveloped due to factors such as a lack of infrastructure, inadequate marketing, and insufficient regulatory frameworks (Mashikinyi, 2020). There is a need to address these challenges to unlock the full potential of gemstone tourism.

Despite Nigeria's abundance of mineral resources, Olade (2021) claims that the southwest portion of the country, particularly Oyo State, is rich in jewels, such as amethyst, agate, barite, garnet, tourmaline, zircon, ruby, quartz, emerald, and topaz. According to Akintade and Odunlade (2024), the growth of gemstone tourism in particular mining regions can significantly support the local industry's development and the promotion of a strong Nigerian brand in Oke Ogun, Oyo State, and throughout Nigeria. A geotourism strategic framework was created as a result of these findings with the goal of promoting gemstone tourism in a few chosen mining regions of Oke Ogun, Oyo State. This study aims to promote Nigeria as a global destination for gemstone tourism, sustainable tourism practices, economic opportunities, and local enterprise development.

## **Literature Review**

### **Strategic Framework for Developing Gemstone Tourism in Nigeria**

Omotayo et al. (2023) noted that it is commonly known that Nigeria's gemstone resources are significant both geologically and economically. According to Olade (2021) and Ayeni et al. (2022), some regions of southwestern Nigeria, especially Oyo State, which is a part of the larger Oke-Ogun mineral belt, are home to a range of precious and semi-precious stones, including tourmaline, topaz, garnet, sapphire, and aquamarine. This research suggests that gemstones can be more than just extractive resources; they can also serve as tourism assets when connected to interpretation, display, and craft industries. This is a critical first step in any plan to reposition mining landscapes as tourist attractions. Research on the gemstone value chain in Nigeria reveals ongoing issues. There is limited downstream processing, weak connections between miners and jewelers, and informal market channels (Antinarelli Freitas,

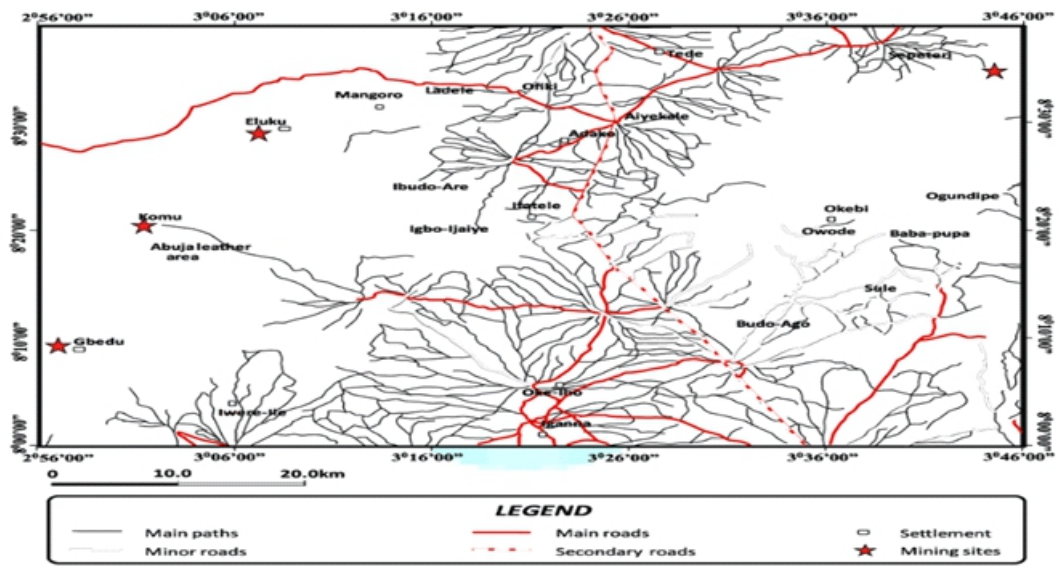
2024; Jepsen, 2024). These factors reduce local economic benefits from gemstone resources. According to Ruben (2024), value-chain analyses show that improving cutting, polishing, certification, and market access can increase local incomes. These enhancements can also attract niche tourists, such as collectors, geotourists, and craft tourists, through attractions like lapidary workshops, gem fairs, and artisan galleries. Thus, tourism strategies for Oke Ogun need to intentionally link upstream mining activity with downstream creative and retail businesses.

The literature focuses on the sustainability of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) and the social and environmental challenges tied to informal gemstone extraction (Folorunso & Folorunso, 2022). Jepsen (2024), studying within Nigeria, reveals issues like land degradation, weak regulatory oversight, safety hazards, and uncertain community benefits. These challenges can harm tourism unless addressed through environmental management, safety improvements, and community development agreements. According to Hatta (2025), it provided a basis for including elements like environmental restoration, safety measures, and benefit-sharing in any gemstone tourism plan. Scholars and case studies from other countries, as well as emerging pilot studies in Nigeria, have examined how to turn abandoned or operating mining sites into tourism attractions (Omosanya & Oseni, 2025). This entails repurposing mining infrastructure, establishing informative centers, and developing historical paths. Their study identifies best practices in site cleanup, interpretive planning, and cooperative management involving stakeholders. The literature suggests practical design approaches, including guided mine tours, displaying lapidary tools in museums, and geo-interpretive signage. It also emphasizes that thorough feasibility studies and community involvement are key to avoiding tokenistic heritage initiatives.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study was carried out in three selected communities of the Oke Ogun area, Oyo state, particularly in Komu, Offiki, and Itasa. The primary industries of the area are cotton-based textiles, farming, and mining. It is reputed as the home of farming and mining. These locations were selected because they represent different stages of the gemstone mining value chain.

**Figure 1:** Map of selected mining areas in Oke Ogun, Oyo State



**Source:** Ajetunmobi, Amidu & Itunu, (2019)

The research employed a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is a technique employed to give a comprehensive summary of a population's traits, actions, and views. This method mainly emphasizes gathering quantitative data to illustrate patterns and trends in a sample. Descriptive surveys aim to understand particular phenomena in their natural occurrence. The target population and sample size of the study consisted of 434 interviewees and focus groups, which are 56 government officials from the Federal and State Ministries of Mines and Steel and the State Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism; 98 members of local miners from Solid Minerals Extractors; 76 artisans from jewelry making; 94 tourists at the mine sites; 50 heritage experts; and 60 community leaders and prominent personalities from selected communities that would be analyzed. To ensure comprehensive representation, a stratified random sampling and multiple sampling techniques were adopted across six key groups: government officials, miners, artisans, tourists, heritage experts, and community leaders. A standardized questionnaire and interview schedule were used to gather information from respondents. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, frequency counts, and five Likert scales.

## Results

### Research Objective One: Promoting Nigeria as a Global Destination for Gemstone Tourism

Table 1 evaluates the promotion of Nigeria as a global destination for gemstone tourism, as investigated.

The respondents rated various promotions of Nigeria gemstone tourism as a global destination using a 5-point Likert scale for measuring attitudes, perceptions, and opinions. It

presents respondents with a statement and asks them to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a scale with five response options, which includes strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Largely, a majority (55%) of respondents recognize that Oke Ogun's gemstone resources have the potential to attract international tourists as an important factor. The Nigerian government effectively promoting gemstone tourism on a global scale is a highly attractive factor, with a substantial majority (50.5%) strongly agreeing. Developing gemstone tourism in Nigeria to enhance its global reputation is one of the most compelling strategies, with 43.8% strongly agreeing on its promotions. 42.4% are neutral, 0.0% strongly disagree, 30% agree, and 25.3% strongly agree that collaborative efforts with international organizations can improve gemstone tourism. The majority of respondents (59.9%) strongly agree that Oke Ogun's cultural legacy enhances its gemstone tourism potential, with 0.0% strongly disagreeing, 0.0% disagreeing, 40.1% neutral, and 0.0% agreeing.

**Table 1:** Promoting Nigeria as a Global Destination for Gemstone Tourism

Statements	S. D	D	N	A	S. A
Oke Ogun's gemstone resources have the potential to attract international tourists	9 2.1%	0 0.0%	19 4.4%	237 55%	169 40%
The Nigerian government effectively promotes gemstone tourism on a global scale	50 11.5%	0 0.0%	15 3.5%	150 34.6%	219 50.5%
Developing gemstone tourism can enhance Nigeria's global reputation	34 7.8%	5 1.2%	20 4.6%	185 42.6%	190 43.8%
Collaborative efforts with international organizations can improve gemstone tourism	0 0.0%	10 2.3%	184 42.4%	130 30%	110 25.3%
Oke Ogun's cultural heritage complements its gemstone tourism potential	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	174 40.1%	0 0.0%	260 59.9%

**Research Objective Two: Develop Sustainable Tourism Practices that Benefit Local Communities and Environment.**

Table 2 shows the results of a study of respondents' thoughts on building sustainable tourism practices that benefit local people and safeguard the environment, which was conducted using a multiple-response approach that allowed participants to choose more than one appropriate choice. The results revealed that most respondents across the three selected communities in Oke Ogun, Oyo State, were aware of the importance of sustainable gemstone tourism. Specifically, 36.9% of respondents from Itasa, 33.2% from Komu, and 20.7% from Offiki agreed that developing sustainable gemstone tourism helps preserve the environment. Similarly, 30.9% of respondents from Itasa, 36.9% from Offiki, and 26.3% from Komu believed that involving local communities in tourism planning ensures long-term sustainability. Furthermore, 40% of respondents from Itasa, 18.4% from Offiki, and 30% from Komu stated that mining activities can be managed in ways that support tourism without

harming the environment. In addition, 30% of respondents from Itasa, 26.7% from Offiki, and 41.5% from Komu emphasized that proper waste management around mining sites is essential for sustainable tourism. Lastly, 23% of respondents from Itasa, 23.7% from Offiki, and 27.6% from Komu agreed that environmental education should be a vital part of gemstone tourism initiatives. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents across the study areas have a strong understanding of the need for sustainability, community participation, responsible mining, and environmental education in developing gemstone tourism.

**Table 2:** Develop sustainable tourism practices that benefit both local communities and the environment.

Variables	Oke Ogun Mining Sites			Total		
	Komu	Offiki	Itasa			
Sustainable Tourism Practices	Sustainable gemstone tourism helps preserve the environment in Oke Ogun	Freq	144	90	160	394
		%	33.2%	20.7%	36.9%	
	Involving local communities in tourism planning ensures its sustainability	Freq	134	160	114	408
		%	30.9%	36.9%	26.3%	
	Mining activities can be managed to support tourism without harming the environment	Freq	173	80	130	383
		%	40%	18.4%	30%	
	Proper waste management around mining sites is essential for sustainability	Freq	130	116	180	426
		%	30%	26.7%	41.5%	
	Environmental education should be a key part of gemstone tourism initiatives	Freq	100	103	120	323
		%	23%	23.7%	27.6%	
Total	Freq	681	549	704	1934	

**Source:** Percentages and totals are based on responses.

**Research Objective Three: Create economic opportunities by creating jobs and fostering local enterprise development.**

The techniques to promote economic prospects through job creation and local enterprise growth are shown in Table 3, as researched by Itasa, Offiki, and Komu in the Oke Ogun area of Oyo State. The respondents had mixed opinions on whether gemstone tourism creates job opportunities for local residents in Oke Ogun, with 0.0% strongly disagreeing. The majority (52.5%) agreed that gemstone tourism can create jobs for local residents in Oke Ogun, and 43.3% strongly agreed with it. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed that development of gemstone-related enterprises boosts the local economy (50.2%). However, most (46.8%) respondents disagreed that tourists purchasing local crafts and goods benefit small businesses. Furthermore, 33.6% are neutral, and 33.6% strongly disagree that expanding tourism infrastructure will assist local economic activity. However, the majority (34.6%) are neutral and do not believe that training programs for local communities increase their participation in gem tourism.

**Table 3: Economic Opportunities and Local Enterprise Develo**

Statements	S. D	D	N	A	S. A
Gemstone tourism can create jobs for local residents in Oke Ogun.	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	18 4.2%	228 52.5%	188 43.3%
The development of gemstone -related enterprises boosts the local economy	0 0.0%	50 11.5%	11 2.5%	155 35.7%	218 50.2%
Tourists purchasing local crafts and goods benefit small businesses	3 0.7%	203 46.8%	0 0.0%	178 41.0%	50 11.5%
Infrastructure development for tourism will positively impact the local economy	146 33.6%	0 0.0%	146 33.6%	40 9.2%	31 7.1%
Training programs for local communities enhance their participation in gemstone tourism	0 0.0%	136 31.3%	150 34.6%	48 11.1%	100 23.0%

**Discussion**

The findings reveal strong optimism among respondents regarding Oke Ogun's potential as a global gemstone tourism destination, with 55% recognizing its appeal to niche markets like geotourism and cultural heritage tourism. This optimism reflects awareness of Nigeria's geological wealth and emerging tourism diversification policies. 50.5% of respondents believe the government promotes gemstone tourism internationally, indicating appreciation for national campaigns. However, 42.4% of people said they didn't have strong opinions about international collaborations, which suggests that there aren't enough strong global partnerships to improve expertise, investment, and visibility. Additionally, 59.9% agree that Oke Ogun's cultural heritage complements its gemstones, emphasizing the need to integrate cultural assets into tourism strategies. Responses on sustainability stress the importance of environmental management and community involvement, with 36.9% from Itasa and 33.2% from Komu acknowledging the role of environmental preservation. While 52.5% believe gemstone tourism can create jobs, gaps in infrastructure and training impede potential benefits. The findings advocate for a strategic framework focused on global visibility, sustainability, community engagement, and economic inclusion through skill development. This approach, rooted in the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), is critical to making sure that Oke Ogun's gemstone tourism grows economically while preserving ecological integrity and cultural identity.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study examines a strategic framework for the enhancement of gemstone tourism in Nigeria, concentrating on mining communities in Oke Ogun, Oyo State. It aims to shift gemstone resources from mere extractive commodities to sustainable tourism products that foster economic diversification, environmental care, and community development. Findings indicate positive local sentiment regarding Oke Ogun's gemstone potential, widespread support for integrating cultural heritage in tourism, and a consensus on the need for

sustainability, community involvement, and economic inclusivity for enduring success. By connecting mining studies with tourism development literature in Nigeria, the study proposes a structured, sustainability-driven approach to tourism planning in mineral-rich areas. The framework emphasizes global promotion, environmental responsibility, and community engagement as essential components to guide policymakers and developers. The practical implications include the necessity for collaborative efforts between mining and tourism authorities, infrastructure improvements, skill enhancement initiatives, and branding strategies to elevate Oke Ogun as a gemstone tourism hotspot. The geographical focus on individual towns restricts the findings' broader significance, as does their dependence on self-reported data. Future research might widen the geographical scope to include more mining regions, conduct longitudinal effect assessments, and incorporate quantitative economic modeling to evaluate income generation and job outcomes. Comparative studies between Nigeria and established gemstone tourism destinations would also enrich policy learning and global benchmarking.

It is recommended that the government and relevant stakeholders invest in infrastructure, including access roads and visitor centers, to improve tourist accessibility and enhance visitor experiences. Efforts should also focus on empowering local communities through vocational training in gemstone processing and tourism services to promote job creation and stimulate local enterprise development. Furthermore, eco-friendly mining practices and effective waste management systems should be implemented to safeguard the environment while supporting sustainable tourism growth. In conclusion, gemstone tourism presents a viable pathway for transforming Oke Ogun's mining landscapes into sustainable development assets. With coordinated policies, community empowerment, environmental safeguards, and strategic marketing, Nigeria can reposition its gemstone sector as both an economic driver and a cultural heritage resource. The relevance of this study lies in its demonstration that responsible and well-planned gemstone tourism can serve as a catalyst for rural regeneration, national branding, and inclusive growth in resource-rich regions.

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