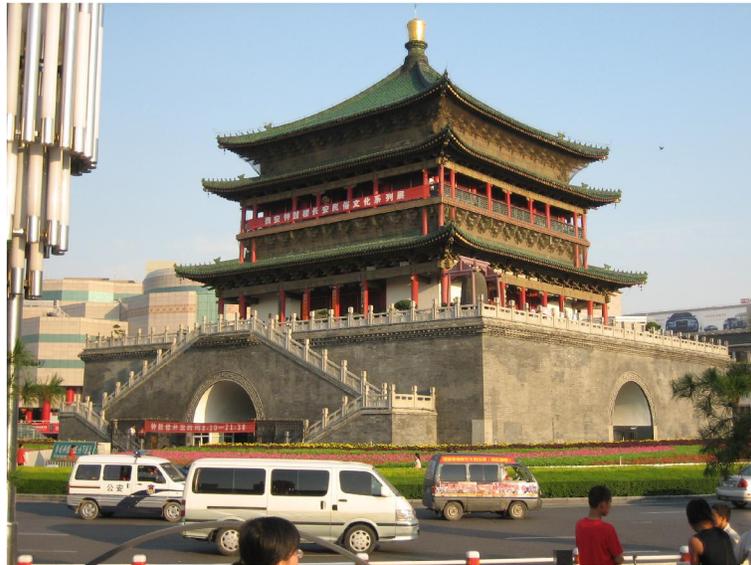


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A Case Study of the Sustainable Development of Bleisure Travel in Xi'an

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A Case Study of the Sustainable Development of Bleisure Travel in Xi'an

1. Background

1.1. Definition of Bleisure

“Bleisure” is a buzzword in the travel industry. It describes a business trip that is associated with extra days of leisure activities. Bleisure travelers arrive at a certain destination for the purpose of business. Before, during or after their intended business activities, they tend to enjoy moments of relaxation through a variety of leisure activities. This association between business and leisure can bring a lot of benefits to all of those involved: business travelers, their companies, tourist destinations, tourism enterprises and local communities.

1.2 Features of Bleisure Travel

In order to have a better understanding of “bleisure”, it is of great necessity to explore both business travel and leisure travel, two terms that compose “Bleisure”.

According to Wikipedia, business travel is “a trip undertaken for work or business purposes, as opposed to other types of travel, such as for leisure purposes or regularly commuting between one’s home and workplace”. Primary business tourism activities include meetings, and attending conferences and exhibitions (Wikipedia, 2017). Thus, business travel has a close connection with MICE, which is an acronym for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions, or Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Events (Wikipedia, 2017). MICE refer to a type of tourism in which large groups, usually planned well in advance, are brought together for a particular purpose (Wikipedia, 2017).

Leisure is defined in the dictionary as relaxation or activities engaged in during the free time when one is not working or attending to other duties. When it comes to tourism, leisure travel is travel for the purpose of leisure such as sightseeing,

appreciating arts, entertaining and so on. In their article, John Swarbrooke and Susan Horner (2002) compares leisure trip with business trip in the following chart.

Items	Leisure Trip	Business Trip
Who Pay Expenses	Tourists	Employers
Who Decide Destinations	Tourists	Organizers of exhibitions, meetings, etc.
Travel Time	Usually on holiday or weekends	On weekdays all year around
Preparation in Advance	Several months in advance for long vacations; several days in advance for short vacations	Some business travels are in a hurry.
Who Travels	Anyone who has free time and money	People who work or are association members
Destinations	Anyplace	Mainly large or medium-sized cities

Chart 1 A Comparison of Leisure Trip and Business Trip

From the chart, we can see that leisure travelers are different from business travelers in their motivations, expenses, and choices of destinations, travel time and ways of preparation. So, when it comes to bleisure travelers, people who “arrive as a business traveller but leave as a holiday maker”(Claire Steiner, director, GTTP – United Kingdom), things become more complicated. For tourist destinations, local communities or travel management companies who want to attract business travelers for leisure, they should know the features of business travelers and their unique leisure needs so as to provide satisfying and personalized services.

There are some researches on bleisure travel. The latest survey from Bridge Street Global Hospitality polled 640 international travelers and found that:

- Most bleisure travelers tack on an average of two vacation days to their business trips.

- More than half of respondents said they've brought family members or their other half with them on such trips.
- The most popular Bleisure activities are sightseeing, dining, arts and culture.
- An overwhelming majority of younger travelers (aged 35 to 44) are more likely to take advantage of a business trip to soak in the sights.
- 94 percent of travelers in the age group of 35 to 44 said they're likely or more than likely to take a Bleisure trip in the next five years. (Bleisure travel, LinkedIn, 2015)

The Hotwire.com survey also found that:

- Younger travelers -- defined as 18-34 -- were more likely to mix business with pleasure compared to their older counterparts (aged 35 to 44) at 56 percent and 37 percent respectively. (Bleisure travel, LinkedIn, 2015)

These statistics give us an insight into the features of bleisure travelers worldwide.

1.3. Overview of Bleisure in China

Business travel has been prosperous in China. "China business travel will increase by 61 percent over the next 5 years, from \$261 billion in 2014 to \$420 billion in 2019. That increase is greater than the increases in business travel growth in the next 8 largest countries combined, including the U.S., Germany, India, U.K., Indonesia, France, Turkey and Japan". (GBTA, 2015)

As for the development of MICE industry, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing are the top 3 exhibition and convention cities in China according to a report released by SMI in 2016. The other important cities are Kunming, Chongqing, Beijing, Shenzheng and Wuhan. What's more, 10 Chinese cities have been ranked as international MICE cities, among which Shanghai and Guangzhou are ranked third and tenth respectively. (xinhuanet, 2017)

When it comes to leisure travel, Dalian, Suzhou, Kunming, Hangzhou and Chengdu are famous leisure centers in China. Now, all kinds of leisure activities are available to travelers, including sightseeing, shopping, entertaining, sports, agricultural tourism products and so on.

Right now, there are many researches on either business travelers or leisure travelers, but relevant researches on bleisure travel are rare.

2. A Case Study of Bleisure Travel in Xi'an

2.1 An Overview of the Case Study

In our case study, we choose Xi'an as the subject of research, investigate the recent development of bleisure travel in Xi'an, make a SWOT analysis of this city and thus put forward suggestions for the sustainable development.

2.1.1 An Overview of Xi'an

- Xi'an is an ancient city known for its long history and profound culture. More than 3,000 years of history including over 1,100 years as the capital city of ancient dynasties, have endowed the city with an amazing historical heritage. (Xian, travelchinaguide) It got different names at different times, Chang'an in Tang dynasty and Haojing in the Western Zhou dynasty. Xi'an is one of the first National Historical and Cultural Cities. It is one of the world's four major ancient civilizations (Xi'an, Athens, Rome, and Cairo). The saying "Rome in the West and Chang'an in the East" shows the historical significance of Xi'an in the world history. (Xi'an Municipal Tourism Administration)
- Xi'an is one of the most important business cities in the northwestern China. First, it is the largest economy of the Shaanxi province. In 2015, the regional GDP is 581.003 billion RMB and the per capita GDP is 66,738 RMB. At least 58 countries have established over 2,560 enterprises here, including nineteen of the Fortune 500 enterprises. These include ABB Group, Mitsubishi, Panasonic, Toshiba, Fujitsu, Coca-Cola, and Boeing (sina, 2016). Besides, Xi'an is one of the high-tech zones in China. Many software technology companies are located in the software park of the High Tech Zone. (Wikipedia) Last but not least, Xi'an attaches great importance to the development of MICE industry. In 2017, 271 national or international exhibitions, conferences and events will be held here (xinhuanet, 2017). One of the most

important exhibitions is China Xi'an Silk Road International Tourism Expo.

- Xi'an is a leisure city that provides tourists from home and abroad with fantastic travel experiences. First, thousand years of history has made Xi'an a treasure house of cultural relics. Famous historical and cultural attractions include Beilin Museum, Ancient City Wall, Bell Tower and Drum Tower, and Qin Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses, just to name a few. Second, praised as "the capital of table delicacies", Xi'an has been rich in delicious local snacks. Crumbled Flatbread in Mutton Stew (Yangrou Paomo), Cold Noodles (Liang Pi) and Shaanxi Sandwich (Rou Jia Mo) are must-try for visitors (Xi'an, travel china duige).

- Xi'an is an international city that plays a significant role in Chinese history as well as in today's China. It was the starting point of the famous Silk Road. In Western Han dynasty, the emperor sent Zhang Qian to the western regions, and officially opened the Silk Road starting at Chang'an, and connected Eurasia. Now Xi'an has international relationships between 29 twin towns and sister cities. The 2017 Eurasian Economic Forum was held in Xi'an from September 21st to 23rd. (Baidu) Besides, Xi'an plays a strategic role in the One Belt & One Road initiative put forward by Chinese president Xi Jinping.

2.1.2 Research Methods

In our case study, we have adopted documentary research, survey research, field study and SWOT analysis.

- **Documentary Research:** We rely on literature, articles, websites and encyclopedia to clarify the subject of our research, collect and analyze relevant research findings that serve as the ground of the case study.

- **Field Study:** During the summer vacation, we conducted a field trip to Xi'an where we experienced and explored in person different sections of Bleisure tourism, including transportation, tourism attractions, hotels, and travel agencies. During our stay in Xi'an, we kept thinking how Xi'an can satisfy the needs of bleisure travelers.

- **Survey Research:** We designed and distributed questionnaires to find out information about bleisure travelers in Xi’an. We interviewed participants of the Expo, employees of travel agencies and hotels to collect first-hand data.

- **SWOT Analysis:** We made a SWOT analysis of the development of bleisure travel in Xi’an to find out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

2.2 Field Study & Survey Research in Xi’an

2.2.1 Itinerary

For investigating bleisure travel in Xi’an, we arranged a 5-day self-guided itinerary.

Day	Transportation	Daily Schedule
D1 Hangzhou—Xi’an	Air	Because of the flight delay, we started our trip on the second day.
D2 Xi’an	Public transportation	Xi’an Beilin Museum—Xi’an Ancient City Wall—Muslim Quarter—Bell Tower & Drum Tower
D3 Xi’an—Lintong	Public transportation	Huaqing Palace and Mount Lishan—Qin Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses—Xi’an Great Wild Goose Pagoda
D4 Qujiang International Conference & Exhibition Center	Public transportation	Xi’an Silk Road International Tourism Expo
D5 Xi’an—Hangzhou	Air	Arrive in Hangzhou

Chart 2 The Itinerary of a 5-day Tour in Xi’an

2.2.2 Exploration of Tourism Resources

During our stay in Xi’an, we visited famous cultural and natural attractions.



Xi'an Beilin Museum: It has seven display rooms for stone tables, eight stele pavilions, two stone sculpture art rooms, six display corridors for epitaphs and four temporary display rooms. Here preserves more than 4000 pieces of stone inscriptions and epitaphs from Qin and Han dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties.



Xi'an Ancient City Wall: Xi'an Ancient City Wall is among the oldest and best preserved city walls in China and one of the largest ancient military defense systems in the world. It is the most complete and most grand ruins of ancient city walls around world.



Bell Tower and Drum Tower: The Bell Tower and Drum Tower of Xi'an dates back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The two are located in the center of the Xi'an city connecting the four roads from North South East and West within the city wall. Atop the Bell Tower you will have a panoramic view of the Xi'an City; atop the Drum Tower you will have a bird's eye view of the Muslim Quarters. The bell sounded at dawn and the drum at dusk each day in ancient times as a kind of timer.



Qin Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses: The figures of warriors, chariots and horses, dating from approximately the late third century, were discovered in 1974 by local farmers in Lintong District of Xi'an. The figures vary in height according to their roles, with the tallest being the generals. It is known as "the eighth wonder of the world", and it is the earliest Chinese relics listed to the world heritage.

We ate delicious local snacks like Crumbled Flatbread in Mutton Stew (Yangrou Paomo), Cold Noodles (Liang Pi) and Shaanxi Sandwich (Rou Jia Mo) and Biangbiang Noodles. Biangbiang Noodles are like a belt and popular in the cuisine of China's Shaanxi Province. The noodles are regarded as one of the "ten strange wonders of Shaanxi".



**Crumbled Flatbread in Mutton Stew
(Yangrou Paomo)**



Cold Noodles (Liang Pi)



Shaanxi Sandwich (Rou Jia Mo)



Biangbiang Noodles

2.2.3 Questionnaires at the Expo

2.2.3.1 Introduction to China Xi'an Silk Road International Tourism Expo

China Xi'an Silk Road International Tourism Expo was held from Aug.5th—6th, 2017 in Qujiang International Conference & Exhibition Centre. Shaanxi Tourism Bureau has started to sponsor the China Xi'an Silk Road International Tourism Expo (CXSRITE) since 2014. It has been successfully held for three years. There are some 500 exhibitors from over 30 countries.

2.2.3.2 Results & Analysis of the Questionnaires

At the Expo, we asked 30 participants including the exhibitors and visitors to complete our questionnaires. Through this questionnaire we find out that:

- 82% respondents are impressed by the history and culture of Xi'an.
- 65% foreign respondents are attracted by the unique structure of Xi'an that the Ancient City Wall surrounds the modern inner city.
- 63% of the respondents said that the local people are hospitable and kind.
- All of the respondents choose to stay in hotels that are close to the Xi'an Qujiang International Conference & Exhibition Centre.
- The public order in Xi'an has left a bad impression on the respondents. The hot weather and the crowded traffic are terrible.

2.2.4 Interviews of Tourism Enterprises

2.2.4.1 Interview of Travel Agencies

We interviewed travel services at the site of the Expo. They told us most participators of the Expo had the desire to visit attractions in Xi'an during a one-day or two-day tour. We also interviewed the manager of Xi'an Yin He Jun Hua Travel Service. This travel service is a company that provides travel services mainly for business travelers. He showed us the data of business travel in the recent two months. In the recent two months, there were about 3 groups of business travelers who attended meetings in Xi'an. There were 30 to 50 people in each group. Their company can design personalized itineraries according to customers' requirements.

2.2.4.2 Interview of Hotels

The hospitality industry has been flourishing in Xi'an. There are many hotels in Xi'an, ranging from 5 star hotels to youth hostels.

During the Expo, 60% of the participants stayed in the Ramada Plaza Xi'an South. The Ramada Plaza Hotel is located in southern Xi'an's Qujiang District, just 15-minutes' drive from downtown. Xi'an Railway Station is just 10 km (6 mi) away while it will take around 45 minutes to reach to airport by car. Diners can enjoy both Chinese and Western food at the on-site restaurant. Those traveling on business can take advantage of the business center and meeting room. Guests can utilize the gym while those simply wanting to relax can make use of the spa. Free Wi-Fi access is available in public areas and rooms. (Ramada Plaza Xi'an South, Ctrip)

We conducted an interview with the manager of Front Desk. He told us that their hotel attracted many business travelers because of its location. It is near the Qujiang International Conference & Exhibition Center, so many businessmen would like to stay in their hotel. It takes about 5 minutes by car from the hotel to the Xi'an Great Wild Goose Pagoda and Tang Paradise, two popular tourist destinations. So it is also a favorite choice for leisure travelers.

2.3 A SWOT Analysis of Bleisure Travel in Xi'an

2.3.1 Strengths

- **Unique cultural resources and abundant natural resources.** Xi'an is a famous historical and cultural city. The ancient capital of the thirteen dynasties has left a very rich cultural heritage. It is one of the best tourism destinations and civilized

cities in China. Qin Shi Huang Mausoleum, Terra Cotta Warriors, Da Yan Pagoda, Xiao Yan Pagoda, Tang Dynasty ruins of Da Ming Palace, Han Dynasty ruins of Wei Yang Palace in Chang'an City and Xingjian temple pagoda are included in the World's Heritage List.

- **Obvious geographical advantages.** Xi'an is located in the middle of Guanzhong Plain, with north border neighboring Weihe River, and south border adjacent to Qinlin Mountain, and is known as being surrounded by 8 rivers. The city has 11 districts and 2 counties, with a total size of 10,108 square kilometers.
- **Convenient transportation.** A three-dimensional transportation network has been formed here, mainly consisting of aviation, railways and highways. In ancient times, as the beginning of the Silk Road, Xian was one of the transport junctions in China. Now Xi'an is one of the most important and convenient transportation hubs in central and western China. Frequent flights, trains and buses connect the city with other major cities all around the country.

2.3.2 Weaknesses

- **Environment problems.** To exploit the tourism and minerals, there are damage and pollution in the northern Qinling Mountain, and parts of the city wall have been badly damaged by human and natural factors. Xi'an faces a huge challenge of balancing preservation of its cultural heritage with the demands of a modern city.
- **Aging issues.** In 2040, the population ageing is a big problem in Xi'an. In 2015, the percentage of the old people was 15.53%. It will become 30% in the 2040.
- **Brain drain.** The problem of brain drain is serious. Although Xi'an has advanced higher education, young people prefer other prosperous cities like Shanghai, Beijing and Hangzhou.

2.3.3 Opportunities

- **The Belt and Road initiative.** The Belt and Road initiative promotes the economic development of Xi'an.
- **Manufacturing industry.** The development of the manufacturing industry will attract more companies. The growing economy of Xi'an supports the

development of a software industry, and the city is a pioneer in the software industry in China.

- **International and national events.** With the development of the tourism and the infrastructure, there will be more international and national events held in Xi'an in the future.

2.3.4 Threats

- **The limited chance of startups.** It is the most important reason that caused the brain drain. Together with the aging issue, the city powder will become a big problem in the future.
- **The traffic problem.** The urban transportation of the city has been somewhat frustrating in recent years because of the metro construction.

2.4 Conclusion

Tourism is the most advantageous industry of Shaanxi, and is Shaanxi's strategic pillar industry for economic development and the leader for modern service industry. With superior geographic condition and the development of economy, Xi'an has attracted many international enterprises. Many important conferences and exhibitions are held in Xi'an. These lead to a large number of business travelers. When they arrive in the city, the abundant cultural resources and natural resources of Xi'an impress them greatly. For instance, the Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses is one of the TOP 3 most wanted destinations of the world's tourists, together with the Great Wall and the Forbidden City in Beijing. In a word, Xi'an has great potential of bleisure travel.

However, several factors like the public order and the crowded traffic have a negative impact on the sustainable development of bleisure travel. Besides, tourism enterprises including scenic spots, travel agencies and hotels, haven't obtained enough information about the requirements, preferences and expectations of business travelers. So they cannot market themselves well to the travelers. And personalized services and products haven't been provided to business travelers.

3. Suggestions on the Sustainable Development of Bleisure Travel

3.1 A Brief Introduction to Sustainable Development

The sustainable tourism can be defined as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNWTO, 2004)

3.2 Suggestions on the Sustainable Development

3.2.1 From the Aspect of Tourist Destinations

- **Environmental impact assessments**

It has grown with environmental impact assessments being a critical component of the tourism industry. EIA helps us to have effective planning, natural resource of management and utilization on the tourism industry.

- **Comprehensive renovation**

Along with the environment worsening and energy drying up, people while exploring different kinds of environment technology also seek new clean energy. We use a comprehensive renovation to resolve the problems one by one.

- **Consummate the management of tourism resources**

Tourism development and planning, the scenic area management and planning, forest parks and nature reserves management, it is a process to maximize the market value and comprehensive efficiency of a region's tourism resources.

3.2.2 From the Aspect of Tourism Enterprises

- **For all the tourism enterprises involved**

They should cultivate green concepts, promote green standards, practice green developing, produce green products and launch green operations so as to achieve green tourism. It's everyone's duty to lead a low-carbon life—to reduce the emissions of carbon, especially carbon dioxide, to protect our environment.

- **From the aspect of hotels**

They should take the time to understand the desires and behaviors of the growing bleisure tourists and make great effort to meet their needs. In order to turn

business travelers into bleisure tourists, hotels should encourage participants to extend their stay at the end of their meetings by giving discount and designing packaged products (such as a package that include ticket of scenic spots and wine products). Besides, hotels can make use of mobile technology to attract potential bleisure tourists.

- **From the aspect of travel agencies and scenic spots**

They should strengthen the innovation of tourist routes and planning, integrate tourism resources to design personalized tourist products, focus on how to enrich the experience of tourists, and improve their participation. Film and TV culture tourism, family trip and rural tourism products can be designed and marketed to the potential bleisure tourists. Take the rural tourism for an example, appreciating the wild flowers in spring, seeking coolness in summer, picking up fruits and vegetables in autumn and enjoying hot spring in winter are personalized tourism products to meet bleisure tourists' needs.

3.2.3 From the Aspect of Government

- It should make environmental protection a basic state policy and one of the keys to realize the sustainable development.
- It should create an eco-friendly society and maintain the sustainable development of all living beings.
- It should enhance people's green consciousness, promote green management, establish and perfect policies and regulations for green industries.
- It should take the responsibility to create a global tourism that integrates eating, lodging, traveling, sightseeing, shopping, and entertaining.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Questionnaires

Hello, thanks for your time. We are doing a survey about business and leisure travel, in order to better understand the businessmen preferred way of leisure tourism consumption level and other aspects to the investigation; you don't need to fill the name, answer for statistical analysis. You only need to fill in according to your actual situation. THANK You for your cooperation.

1. **Your gender** a) Male b) Female
2. **Your age** a) Under 25 b) 25-35 c) 35-45 d) 45 and above
3. **Which hotel are you staying in during your trip? Why you choose this hotel?**
4. **Why you come to Xi'an?**
5. **Do you prefer to stay at the hotel after you finish your work, or do you want to visit some scenic spots nearby?**
 - a) The hotels have good facilities and recreational facilities.
 - b) Nearby attractions are difficult to go to other places, of course, go to local characteristics.
 - c) Others
6. **How long will you stay in Xi'an?**
7. **Which city do you want to visit most in China?**
8. **Your feelings during your trip in Xi'an.**

Appendix 2 Notes for Teachers

Xi'an is the capital of Shaanxi Province, People's Republic of China. It plays a significant role in the One Belt & One Road Initiative, and it attaches great importance to the development of MICE industry. As one of the oldest cities in China, its long history of more than 3000 years has endowed the city with numerous cultural relics, natural sceneries, local snacks and unique customs and lifestyle, all of which can meet the leisure needs of business travelers. So Xi'an has a great potential to develop Bleisure tourism.

This case study focuses on the sustainable development of Bleisure travel in Xi'an. The students have investigated the current situation, identified existing problems and put forward suggestions on how Xi'an can make full use of its resources to guarantee a sustainable development. Teachers can use this case study in their classrooms from the following three aspects and relevant activities are designed for each topic.

Topic 1 What is Bleisure Tourism

Activity 1

Teachers pose the question "what is bleisure tourism" at the very beginning and ask students to read the first part of the case study and other provided resources.

Activity 2

After reading relevant materials, students can be divided into groups and discuss with their group members on the following questions:

- What is the definition of bleisure
- What are the connections between bleisure travel & business travel
- What are the features of bleisure travel
- How can business travelers be converted into leisure travelers
- Can you give examples of bleisure travel
- What are your opinions about bleisure travel

Activity 3

Each group gives a presentation on their findings and ideas about bleisure travel. Teachers give comments on their presentations and give a summary to help students have a better understanding of this new trend in tourism.

Topic 2 Bleisure Tourism in Xi'an

Activity 1

Teachers play a video of Xi'an and ask students to share expressions of this city after watching the video.

Activity 2

Students are offered reading materials about Xi'an, including its history, culture, economy, transportation and so on. They are encouraged to look up more information about this Chinese city after class. Then, they are supposed to write a report about bleisure travel in Xi'an based on the following questions:

- How is bleisure travel developed in Xi'an
- How can Xi'an make full use of its resources
- Does Xi'an develop its tourism sustainably and what are your suggestions

Activity 3

In the next class, students give a presentation about their report and discuss with the teacher and other students.

Topic 3 Sustainable Development of Bleisure Tourism

Activity 1

The teacher gives several topics about sustainable development of bleisure tourism and students are supposed to choose one of the given topics to give a presentation or write a report. Suggested topics are listed in the follows.

- Who is responsible for the sustainable development of a tourist destination
- What does technology play in the sustainable development
- How can different tourism enterprises such as hotels, travel companies, scenic spots cooperate with each other to ensure the sustainable development