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IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF STRATEGIC BUSINESS MODELS IN THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY BASED ON THE OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OF THE COMPETITIVE MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, organizations encounter a turbulent environment. Organizations should recognize their current position and by trusting their capabilities use the environmental opportunities and get ready to face threats. This has been made possible by strategic planning. Iran's air industry faces various threats and opportunities nowadays where the use of strategic planning seems necessary; thus, the purpose of the study is to identify and prioritize the opportunities and threats of the competitive airline industry in Iran Air Co. and to present appropriate strategies. The population was Iran Air's personnel who were 70 people. The sampling method used was simple random sampling, where 59 subjects were selected using Krejcie and Morgan table. Data collection tool was a 3-part researcher-made questionnaire whose validity was determined by the experts and professors of the university and its reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was 0.78 and 0.88 for threats and opportunities respectively. The results indicated that the most important threats to Iran's air industry were lack of domestic airline industry, the slow growth of the domestic airline industry, and the worn out airline's fleet due to sanctions. The most important opportunities for the air industry were using the updated equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain aircraft, obtaining adequate credits and loans for Iran Air and the country's geographical location in increasing passenger transit, regional and international cooperation and receiving the currency of the airplanes. Given results, the strategies of using updated equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain aircraft for launching the airline industry in Iran, and importing technology, buying new aircraft and its technology, and modernizing the airline fleet and so on are recommended.

Keywords: *Air Industry, Iran Air Company, Competitive Market, Strategic Planning.*

INTRODUCTION

Only having a good business model at the start of the business is not important, and what is more vital is having and keeping an optimal business model along the lifecycle of the firm (Tecee, 2010). With a glance at the business environment in the past years when completion was not tense and the competition environment was less disturbed, business models were less complex and more stable, so that they could be used for a longer period, but with the business environment becoming complex and increasing competition in business, a competitive business model tangible and timely today in the current environment may expire or be discarded morrow (Tavakkoli et al., 2012). Thus, the ability to design and implement an innovative business model is vital for the growth and sustainability of the activity of an organization (Scott-Kemmis, 2012). According to Magretta, a suitable business model has the ability of answering customer questions, customer value, and how to earn money, describing

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the context of the business logic of the organization and describes how the value can be measured and provides customers with an affordable price (Magretta, 2002). Thus, if an organization lacks an appropriate business model, it will not capture a significant part of the market (Scott-Kemmis, 2012). In today's turbulent environments, strategic planning models help managers achieve their desired organizational goals (David & David, 2014). According to McNamara, there is no uniform and complete version for strategic planning for all organizations, and each organization selects a model, based on its nature, and by making some changes to it, uses it as its strategic planning process (Tayebi, 2003). Moreover, as aviation industry in each country shows the economic situation and its industrial development, so that this industry should be considered as one of the important factors in the economic, cultural, social, … on development of any society. The importance of this industry is to the extent that the world's philosophers believe that if underdeveloped countries do not heed to this industry at the beginning of the 21st century, the growth and development of these countries will be minimized. Accordingly, considering the climatic and geographical conditions of Iran, the role of this industry in the comprehensive development of the country can be explained well. In addition, the geostrategic and geopolitical status of Iran lets it have a transit role as the main hub for regional transportation (Zarrabi et al., 2009). In the present century, the air industry has a very crucial role in the relations of various countries of the world, exchanging of culture, showing economic and military power and acceleration of the vital affairs of a country. With the daily invention of new planes, the distances become less in the world, so cultural, economic and social exchanges of countries increase. Hundreds of thousands of people travel conveniently and comfortably via this route for various purposes around the world, including Iran. Thus, it is necessary to prevent the stagnation prevailing in the aviation system done in a unique cycle for many years, and to develop and adapt today's global conditions. Thus, for strategic planning in the airline industry (Iran Air Co.), the airline industry in Iran Air should be studied well and the threats of this industry should be well identified, in order to deal with these threats, the opportunities ahead of this industry should be identified well and explored, to reduce the existing threats and turn them to opportunities. Hence, the purpose of the study is to identify and prioritize business strategic models in the airline industry of Iran Air, according to the opportunities and threats of the competitive market.

Conceptual model of research

The structure of the study is presented in form of the following model.

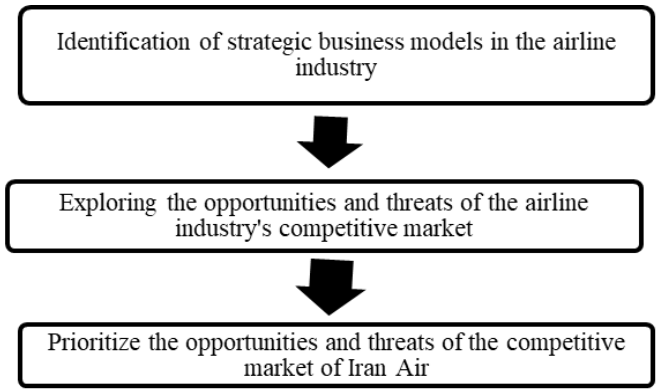

Chart 1: Conceptual model of research

Purposes

General objectives

The purpose of the study was to identify and prioritize strategic business models in the airline industry of Iran Air according to the opportunities and threats of the competitive market.

Specific objectives

Identification and prioritization of the problems of the airline's competitive market in Iran Air
Identification and prioritization of the opportunities of the competitive airline industry in Iran Air
Identification and prioritization of airline industry solutions at Iran Air

Research questions

1. What are the threats of the airline industry in Iran Air in a competitive market based on priority?
2. What are the opportunities of the airline industry in Iran Air in the competitive market based on priority?
3. What are the solutions in the airline industry in Iran Air to address the threats ahead?

METHODS

This study was quantitative-qualitative research and its purpose is practical, as the research goal is to achieve the principles and rules applied in real and practical situations, helping improve procedures. The method of the study was descriptive-survey considering the method of reaching the facts and data processing. Considering the study scope, the study was cross-sectional. This means that this project is used to describe the characteristics and attitudes of individuals in a community in relation to the subject of research at a certain point in time. Cross-sectional designs are used not only to describe the variables of the population at a time, but also to study the relationship between the variables affecting it. Data collection method used was library and field. Thus, at first, using a library method (papers, books and various sites related to the subject), we identified strategic business models and by conducting interviews and library methodology, the opportunities and threats of the aviation industry were identified. A questionnaire was designed. Then, at the field phase, data was collected using a questionnaire. Thus, data collection tool interviewed using the researcher-made questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by the university professors and experts in the field of aviation industry and its reliability was calculated using Cronbach alpha. The population of this study was the employees of Iran Air working in this company. Sampling method was simple random sampling, and Krejcie and Morgan table were used to determine the sample size. Data analysis in this study has two parts. In the first part, library method and interviews with relevant experts were used to identify strategic business models with data analysis done using content analysis method. Moreover, in this section, with the help of available resources and interviews with specialists, the opportunities and threats of the competitive market in the Iran's airline industry were identified. However, in the second part of the research to prioritize strategic models based on the opportunities and threats of the competitive market, data analysis was done using SPSS.

RESULTS

Friedman test was used to see whether there was a prioritization capability of the threats, opportunities, and solutions in the airline industry in Iran Air. Thus, the most effective and most important threats, opportunities, and solutions in Iran's air industry can be identified.
In studying the priority of threats in Iran Air, based on Friedman test, as the significance level of the Chi-square statistic was less than the error margin of $\alpha = 0.01$, one could conclude that threats in Iran Air has the ability to prioritize. The significance of prioritization and the priority of the components are shown in the following tables:

Table 1: Studying the significance of prioritization of threats in Iran Air

Frequency	59
Chi square	265.15
Degree of freedom	16
Sig.	0.000

Source: Research results

As it's seen in Table 1, the significance level is less than 1%, so one can conclude that threats in Iran Air are capable of prioritizing and this prioritization is significant. The priorities of the components are expressed in terms of the rating average in the table below.

Table 2: Prioritization of the threats in Iran Air

Threats	Friedman's average rating	Priority
Lack of investment security in Iran Air Airlines	757.	11
The slow growth of the airline industry in Iran	11.63	3
Lack of an airline industry inside the country	14.14	1
The presence of the old technology in Iran Air Co.	10.10	7
The lack or the problem of supplying external parts	12.29	2
Cancellation or delay of flights due to the lack of transportation fleet	10.13	6
Increased passenger risk due to the wear and tear of the aviation fleet	7.93	10
Reduction of the quality of the lines due to the wear and tear of the fleet	8.75	9
Inability to sell airline tickets to Iran Air from service agencies due to sanctions	7.44	14
Refusal to sell fuel to Iranian worn out planes due to sanctions	4.21	17
The prohibition of flying to Europe for various reasons, such as, wear and tear and air safety of Iran Air	7.63	12
Wearing of Iran Air fleet due to sanctions	11.28	4
Reducing passenger traffic from airlines due to the airline's weariness	7.10	15
Developing the capacity of the passenger fleet and the non-economic development of these airports due to the value and dependence of the technology of the facilities	9.07	8
Not equipped with some airports to advanced navigation systems for night flights	10.53	5
Optimal lack of planning and proper utilization of resources and lack of a long-term strategic plan	7.58	13
Failure to implement effective policies and strict implementation of strategies and continuous monitoring and control over tasks	5.43	16

Source: Research results

The above table shows that the threat of the absence of the domestic aviation industry in the country with an average rating of 14.14 is the first priority, lack or the problem of supplying external parts with 12.29 is in the second priority and the slow growth of the domestic air industry is in the third priority with 11.63. We will evaluate Friedman test for the opportunities of Iran Air.

Table 3: Studying the prioritization of opportunity components of Iran Air

Frequency	59
Chi square	24.71
Degree of freedom	5
Sig.	0.000

Source: Research results

As is seen in Table 3, the significance is less than 1% and one can conclude that the components of the opportunities of Iran Air Co. are capable of prioritizing that is significant. We will deal with the priorities of each of the components in terms of the average rating in the table below.

Table 4: Prioritization of the opportunities in Iran Air

Opportunities	Average rating	Priority
Iran's geographical position in increasing passenger transit and regional and international cooperation in obtaining currency from transit planes	3.28	4
Establishing an appropriate sanctioning position to work with world-renowned factories such as Boeing for the transfer of day aircraft and technology to the country	3.14	5
Strengthening human resources and training them to deal with sanctions	2.97	6
Providing technical and engineering services to other airline companies due to the availability of qualified and experienced staff	3.58	3
Using the equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain airplanes	4.03	1
Getting proper bank and credit facilities for Iran Air	3.99	2

Source: Research results

According to the above table, the opportunity to use the equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain airplanes with an average rating of 4.03 has the first priority, obtaining appropriate credits and facilities for Iran Air with an average rating of 3.99 is in the second priority and the provision of technical and engineering services to other airlines due to the presence of qualified and experienced staff ranks is in the third priority with an average rating of 3.58.

The following is a review of Friedman's test for Iran Air's solutions to address future threats.

Table 5: Examining the prioritization of components of Iran Air solutions

Frequency	59
Chi square	199.98
Degree of freedom	9
Sig.	0.000

Source: Research results

As it's seen from Table 5, the significance is less than 1% and one can conclude that the components of the Iran Air solutions can be prioritized, which is significant. The following is the priorities of each of the components in terms of the average rating in the table below.

Table 6: Prioritization of the components of Iran Air solutions

Solutions	Average rating	Priority
Attracting private sector investors by raising investment security in Iran Air	3	10
Using new and up-to-date technology in Iran Air through communication with technology-rich countries	4.42	7
Modernizing airline fleet by purchasing new aircraft	8.12	2
Improving management to reduce flight delays	5.41	5
Negotiation with airline agencies to sell Iran Air tickets	4.60	8
Negotiating with European countries to sell airplane fuel to Iran Air Airlines	5.97	4
Abolishing the ban on flights to Europe through negotiation with relevant countries	3.67	9
Equipping airports to advanced navigation systems	8.36	1
Optimal planning and efficient use of resources and implementation of a long-term strategic plan	6.21	3
Contracts with foreign companies to invest and import technology to build aircraft parts into the country	5.23	6

Source: Research results

The results of Table 6 showed that the solution of equipping the airports with advanced navigation systems with an average rating of 8.36 is in the first priority, modernizing aircraft fleet by purchasing new aircraft with an average rating of 8.12 is in the second priority and the optimal planning and appropriate productivity of resources and the implementation of a long-term strategic plan with an average rank of 6.21 is in the third priority.

We will examine prioritizing the opportunities and threats of Iran Air's airline industry according to the coefficient of variation, and other research questions.

Identification and prioritization of the threats to Iran Air Airlines

In this section, we examine the first question.

1. What are the threats of the airline industry in Iran Air Co. in the competitive market based on priority?

The average, standard deviation and coefficient of variation were used to identify the threats of the Iran Air Co. industry, the results of which are summarized below.

Table 7: Identification and prioritization of threats to Iran Air

Threats	Mean	SD	Coefficient of variations	Priority
Lack of investment security in Iran Air Airlines	2.83	1.17	41.3	9
The slow growth of the airline industry in the country	3.71	0.911	24.5	2
The lack of an airline industry inside the country	4.49	0.504	11.2	1
The old technology in Iran Air Airlines	3.39	1.52	44.8	11
The lack or the problem of supplying external parts	4	1.36	34	5
Cancellation or delay of flights due to old transportation fleet	3.31	1.34	40.4	8
Increased passenger risk due to the wear and tear of the fleet of aviation	2.61	1.55	59.3	17

Lowering the quality of the lines due to the wear and tear of the fleet	3.03	1.38	45.5	12
Inability to sell airline tickets to Iran Air from service agencies due to sanctions	2.41	1.30	53.9	15
Refusal to sell fuel to Iranian worn out planes due to sanctions	1.73	0.806	46.5	14
The prohibition of flying to Europe for various reasons, such as the wear and tear of Iran Air	2.78	1.28	34.2	4
Exhaustion of Iran Air Airlines due to sanctions	3.68	1.26	34.2	3
Reducing passenger traffic from airlines due to the airline's exhaustion	2.51	0.972	38.7	7
Developing the capacity of the passenger fleet and the non-economic development of these airports due to value and dependence of the technology of the facilities	3.22	1.20	37.2	6
Non-equipped airports to advanced navigation systems for night flights	3.32	1.43	43.07	10
Optimal lack of planning and proper utilization of resources and lack of a long-term strategic plan	2.64	1.44	54.5	16
Failure to implement effective policies and strict implementation of strategies and continuous monitoring and control over tasks	2.20	1.01	45.9	13

Source: Research results

Table 7 listed 17 threats including lack of investment security in Iran Air Airlines, the slow growth of the airline industry in the country, the lack of an airline industry inside the country, the old technology in Iran Air Airlines, the lack or the problem of supplying external parts, cancellation or delay of flights due to old transportation fleet, increased passenger risk due to the wear and tear of the fleet of aviation, lowering the quality of the lines due to the wear and tear of the fleet, inability to sell airline tickets to Iran Air from service agencies due to sanctions, refusal to sell fuel to Iranian worn out planes due to sanctions, the prohibition of flying to Europe for various reasons, such as the wear and tear of Iran Air, exhaustion of Iran Air Airlines due to sanctions, reducing passenger traffic from airlines due to the airline's exhaustion, developing the capacity of the passenger fleet and the non-economic development of these airports due to value and dependence of the technology of the facilities, non-equipped airports to advanced navigation systems for night flights, optimal lack of planning and proper utilization of resources and lack of a long-term strategic plan, and failure to implement effective policies and strict implementation of strategies and continuous monitoring and control over tasks.

Using the questionnaire, these threats were given to respondents to be prioritized. Prioritizing threats was obtained using the coefficient of variation. By dividing the standard deviation into the average of each of the questions (threats) of Iran Air calculated, and each of the questions or threats mentioned in Table 2-6, whose coefficient of variation is lower, has the priority.

The results of Table 7 showed that the threat of aviation industry in the country with a coefficient of variation 11.2 ranked first as the most important threat. The second priority was the slow growth of the domestic aviation industry, with a coefficient of variation equal to 24.5. Moreover, the threat of exhaustion of the national airline fleet due to sanctions and a ban on flights to Europe because of various reasons, such as exhausting of Iran airplanes with the coefficient of variation 34.2 were in the third and fourth stages. Priorities continued like this for all of the 17 threats listed in the above table, in the end, the threat of increasing the passenger risk due to the wear and tear of the aviation fleet with a coefficient of variation 59.3

was in the last priority. The coefficient of variation is used to examine and prioritize the opportunities of Iran Air industry in the competitive market.

Identification and prioritization of Iran Air Airlines opportunities

This section deals with the second question of the research.

2. What are the opportunities of Iran Air airline industry in the competitive market based on priority?

For this purpose, standard deviation and coefficient of variation were used.

Table 8: Identification and prioritization of Iran Air Airlines Opportunities

Opportunities	Mean	SD	Coefficient of variations	Priority
The country's geographical position in increasing passenger transit and regional and international cooperation in obtaining currency from transit planes	2.90	1.58	54.4	3
Establishing appropriate conditions to resolve sanctioning with world-renowned factories such as Boeing for the transfer of day aircraft and technology to the country	2.53	1.61	63.6	6
Strengthening human resources and training them to deal with sanctions	2.49	1.43	57.4	5
Providing technical and engineering services to other airline companies due to the availability of qualified and experienced staff	3.02	1.69	55.9	4
Using the equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain aircraft	3.44	1.38	40.1	1
Getting the right bank and credit facilities for Iran Air Airlines	3.07	1.41	45.9	2

Source: Research results

Table 9 lists six opportunities as the country's geographical position in increasing passenger transit and regional and international cooperation in obtaining currency from transit planes, establishing appropriate conditions to resolve sanctioning with world-renowned factories such as Boeing for the transfer of day aircraft and technology to the country, strengthening human resources and training them to deal with sanctions, providing technical and engineering services to other airline companies due to the availability of qualified and experienced staff, using the equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain aircraft, and getting the right bank and credit facilities for Iran Air Airlines.

For prioritizing these opportunities, standard deviations and coefficients of variations were used to obtain the coefficient of variations, the standard deviation divided by the average and the coefficient of variation of each of the named opportunities. Each of the opportunities with lower coefficient of variation has the priority.

Using respondents' comments, they are prioritized by the coefficient of variation of these opportunities. The results of the table show that the opportunity to use the equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain planes with a coefficient of variation of 40.1 is in first priority. Obtaining appropriate credits and facilities for Iran Air Airlines with a coefficient of variation 45.9 is in the second priority and the country's geographical position in increasing the transit of passengers and regional and international cooperation in obtaining currency from transit planes with a coefficient of variation of 54.4 is in the third priority. Finally, establishing appropriate conditions to resolve sanctioning with world-renowned factories such

as Boeing for the transfer of day aircraft and technology to the country has the last priority with coefficient of variation of 63.6.

According to the results above, we have dealt with the analysis of strategic factors.

Table 9: Summary of analysis of the strategic factors

Strategic factors	Coefficient of variation
O1 Use of the equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain aircraft	40.1
O2 Getting the right bank and credit facilities for Iran Air Airlines	45.9
O3 The country's geographical position in increasing passenger transit and regional and international cooperation in obtaining currency from transit planes	54.4
T1 Lack of an airline industry inside the country	11.2
T2 The slow growth of the airline industry in the country	24.5
T3 The exhaustion of Iran Air Airlines due to sanctions	34.2

Source: Research results

After analyzing the threats and opportunities presented above, Table 9 summarized the analysis of strategic factors, using Iran Air's threat and opportunity analysis tables. This was performed by reviewing the coefficient of variation of each of the threats and the opportunity ahead in the above analysis. In fact, the most important threats and opportunities were taken to the strategic analysis table.

Identification and prioritization of the existing solutions

In this part of the research, we examined the third question.

3. What are the solutions in the airline industry in Iran Air to address the threats ahead?

This has been done by using standard deviation, and coefficient of variation.

Table 10: Prioritizing the existing solutions

Opportunities	Mean	SD	Coefficient of variations	Priority
Attracting private sector investors by raising investment security in Iran Air	1.76	0.773	43.9	5
The use of new and up-to-date technology in Iran Air Airlines through communication with high-tech countries	2.51	1.62	64.5	10
Modernizing airline fleet by purchasing new aircraft	4.54	0.502	11.01	2
Improving management to reduce flight delays	3.02	1.45	48.01	8
Negotiation with airline agencies to sell Iran Air tickets	2.69	1.44	53.5	9
Negotiation with European countries to sell plane's fuel to Iran Air	3.36	1.44	42.8	4
Abolishing the ban on flights to Europe through negotiation with relevant countries	2.27	1.08	47.5	7
Equipping airports with advanced navigation system	4.59	0.495	10.7	1
Optimal planning and efficient use of resources and implementation of a long-term strategic plan	3.51	1.10	31.3	3
Contracts with foreign companies to invest and import technology to build aircraft parts into the country	2.93	1.388	47.09	6

Source: Research results

According to Table 9, 10 strategies were prioritized according to respondents, which were attracting private sector investors by raising investment security in Iran Air, the use of new and up-to-date technology in Iran Air Airlines through communication with high-tech countries,

modernizing airline fleet by purchasing new aircraft, improving management to reduce flight delays, negotiation with airline agencies to sell Iran Air tickets, negotiation with European countries to sell plane's fuel to Iran Air, abolishing the ban on flights to Europe through negotiation with relevant countries, equipping airports with advanced navigation system, optimal planning and efficient use of resources and implementation of a long-term strategic plan, and contracts with foreign companies to invest and import technology to build aircraft parts into the country.

For prioritizing these strategies, standard deviations and coefficients of variations used. In order to obtain the coefficient of variation, the standard deviation was obtained by dividing the average and the coefficient of variations of each of the solutions - each strategy with lower coefficient of variation has more priority.

The results of Table 10 showed that the solution of equipping airports with advanced navigation systems with a coefficient of variation 10.7 has the first priority, as well as a new approach is by purchasing new aircraft to the fleet with a coefficient of variation 11.01 is in the second priority, and the optimal planning and proper utilization of resources and the implementation of a long-term strategic plan with a coefficient of variations 31.3 is in the third priority. As it's seen in the table, prioritizing is done the same way until finally the solution of getting advantage from new and up-to-date technology of Iran Air Airlines through relationship with the high-tech countries with the coefficient of variation 64.5 is in the last priority.

CONCLUSION

As there is no airline industry in Iran, more emphasis is on the external environment (opportunities and threats), so in this study the opportunities and threats were investigated, which was in line with the results of Darwish et al. (2013).

Inferential statistics showed 17 threats, 6 opportunities and 10 solutions in the airline industry of Iran Air, which according to the respondents' opinions; the most important ones are as follows. Prioritization was done using the coefficient of variations, so that each component with a lower coefficient of variation has the more priority.

Among the threats, lack of domestic airline industry is ranked the most important threat. The second threat is the slow growth of the airline industry inside the country and the exhaustion of the Iran Air airline due to sanctions and a ban on flights to Europe for various reasons, such as Iran's exhausted airplanes, was the third threat, which has a negative effect on customer service, this is consistent with the results of Kumar et al. (2010), Zhou et al (2009) and Hosseini and Panahi (2007).

Among the opportunities, the opportunity to use up-to-date equipment and facilities of the world for the maintenance and repair of aircraft has the first priority and suitable bank loans for Iran Air Airlines is in the second priority. Moreover, the geographical location of the country in increasing the transit of passengers and regional and international cooperation in the receipt of currency from transit aircraft is in the third priority, so according to the available capabilities in the form of opportunities for this company, one can deal with or reduce the threats to Iran Air airline industry, which is consistent with the results of Kumar et al. (2010). The most important strategies available are as follows.

1. One can use the opportunity to use up-to-date equipment and facilities of the world to repair and maintain aircraft for launching the airline industry in the country and introduce technology and use the Iranian youth to activate the industry in the country.
2. Given the good banking facilities available to the country's airline industry, it is possible to buy new aircraft and technology that would make the fleet more modern and use the new and modern airplanes.
3. According to the country's geographical position in increasing the transit of passengers and regional and international cooperation in obtaining currency from transit airplanes, one can use this opportunity to conclude more agreements with foreigners for direct flights to Europe and to get their agreement to refuel Iranian airplanes and to take advantage of up-to-date technologies.

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