

## Determining the Relationship between Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty in Tehran, Iran: Case of iPhone Smartphone

Ladan Safa<sup>#1</sup>, Mohammad Reza Daraei<sup>#2</sup>

*#1 MBA Student, Department of Management, Payame Noor, Post code: 3971189451  
Tehran, Iran, Email: ladisafa@yahoo.com*

*#2 Assistant professor, Department of Management, Payame Noor, Tehran, Iran*

### ABSTRACT

Previous researchers have explored the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty and role of brand personality in enhancing brand loyalty has been highlighted in many studies. The current research aims to determine the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran (capital city of Iran). In order to achieve this, quantitative approach involving data collection from two hundred and thirty consumers was taken. Based on the literature, brand personality is a function of five dimensions which are Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. In order to data analysis, reliability tests, correlation tests, and standard regression analysis were run in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The results reveal that each dimension of brand personality has a positive and significant relationship with brand personality. Moreover, results of regression analysis supports that brand personality has a positive and high relationship with brand loyalty (Standardized Coefficient Beta= .734). It indicates that brand personality of Apple Company increases brand loyalty of consumers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran. In addition, this research is useful for scholars who are concerned about relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty and will be useful for managers of Apple Company in order to maintain and enhance high level of loyalty among consumers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran by opening up and registering official representative office.

**Keywords:** Brand Personality, Brand Loyalty, iPhone Smartphone, Tehran, Iran

**Corresponding Author:** (Ladan Safa)

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In today's competitive environment, companies try to retain their current customers because finding new customers can be expensive. In order to achieve this aim, having a deep and strong relationship with consumers is so important, and companies use brand reputation as a key role. Besides, brand personality is a group of human characteristics which are attributed to the name of specific brand (Aaker 1997). In fact, many consumers are interested in a specific brand because it is close to their personality (Park and John 2011). Therefore, brand personality can play as an essential role in the success of brand.

Additionally, loyal customers are defined as committed customers who repurchase their needs (products and services) from a company or a special brand and suggest these products and services to their friends (Chi, Yeh et al. 2009). In reality, companies attempt to have customers who recognize and believe a brand personality and to reinforce the relationship between the brand and customer in order to increase the brand loyalty.

Moreover, because of the increasing development of technology in today's competitive world, companies make more effort in order to use this technology to facilitate communication between people. Smartphone is known as a tool to make easy relationship. In order to attract more customers, the name of brand has a key role. Apple products such as iPhone Smartphone have attracted customers in Iran and being loyal to the Apple Company is a salient issue in this case. This issue and significant relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty according to the literature and studies by researchers such as (Farhat and Khan 2011) and (Teimouri, Fanae et al. 2016) of which will be reviewed in the literature review of this study, have been motivated authors to conduct a study on the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty in Tehran, Iran among customers of iPhone Smartphone..

This study goes through the previous studies in terms of brand personality, brand loyalty and the relationship between them. Also, it explains problem statement in details. Then, a quantitative approach with 230 consumers of iPhone Smartphone as the statistical population in Tehran (capital city of Iran) was taken by authors. Finally, data analysis will be run through IBM SPSS version 22.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the literature review of this study, firstly; brand personality and its dimensions will be defined in details and valid model related to it will be reviewed in-depth. Secondly, brand loyalty will be defined regarding review of literature. Thirdly, some published studies relevant to the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty will be reviewed. Fourthly, issue related to lack of official representative office of Apple Company will be stated. Then, research model will be illustrated and cited. And literature review will be ended by formulation of research questions, development of hypothesis which is in line with major research objective of the study, and stating major objective and supporting objectives of the present research.

### **2.1 Brand Personality and its Dimensions**

Reviewing studies show that brand personality has been considered for many years. Brand personality refers to a symbolic or self-expressive function for consumer (Keller 1993) because

human characteristics are reminded by a brand (Aaker 1997). He defined that a set of human characteristics which cause someone to remember a brand is named brand personality (Aaker 1997). besides, brand personality is associated with human personality traits which may be attributed a specific brand (Kotler 2009). (Lannon 1993) stated that brand personality in an environment of symbolic consumption is known as differentiating factor, by which the consumers express their idea and appear their characteristics (Sirgy 1982). So, brand personality has two aspects. One is the human characteristics which is associated with a special brand and the other is consumer's imagine about a brand personality.

According to (Achouri and Bouzlama 2010) brand personality is important for executive marketing managers because they can use it as a strategic tool which reinforces the relationship between the brand and consumers. The reason can be this fact that consumer often like to choose a brand which is close to their personality (Park and John 2011). Moreover, (Arora and Stoner 2009) in their study mentioned that a strong emotional relationship between the customers and the brand can lead to committed and loyal customers. Based on (Biel 1993), customer choice and preference is affected by brand personality and as such, based on (Aaker 1996), brand personality creates value for both the consumer and the company. Therefore, by creating a special brand perception for the products, companies get more attention from the consumers and finally customer's commitment and loyalty will be enhanced.

(Aaker 1997) Developed a measurement scale for brand personality with five dimensions including:

- Sincerity: it is known as the degree of warmth in a personality trait of a brand or in other words, it shows honesty and health of a brand.
- Excitement: it is known as the degree of happiness and energy in a personality trait of brand or in other words, moral and brevity of a brand.
- Competence: it is known as the degree of determination, responsibility, and patience in a brand's personality trait. In fact, it shows success and reliability of a brand in this scale.
- Sophistication: it is known as the degree of style and level in a brand's personality trait. In other words, it indicates high level such as magnificence of a brand.
- Ruggedness: it is known as the strength of a brand.

Brand personality and its dimensions based on the study of (Aaker 1997) is shown in figure 1.

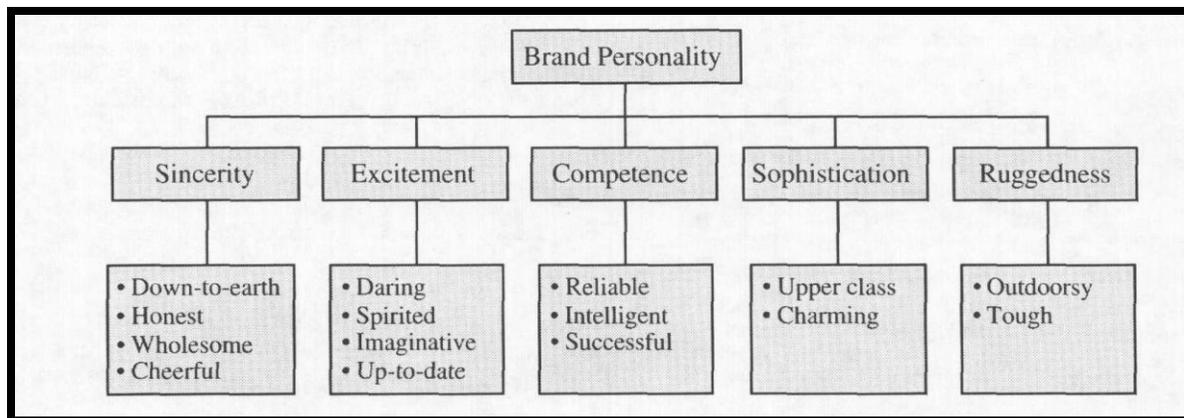


Fig 1: Brand personality and its dimensions adapted from (Aaker 1997)

## 2.2 Brand Loyalty

The most complete definition of brand loyalty was explained by (Jacoby and Olson 1970). They stated that brand loyalty is the consequence from non-random and long existence behavior response. Then, they extended that brand loyalty is a mental purchase process which is formed by some certain decision units who consider and think about more than one brand. Then (Jacoby and Chestnut 1978) identified six requirements of brand loyalty as its concept: brand loyalty is a function of psychological processes, a biased and behavioral response which is expressed over time by some decision unit and with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a group of such brands. Besides, Oliver (1999, p. 34)(Oliver 1999) in his study defined brand loyalty as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior.” Thus, brand loyalty can be explained as a customer’s attachment to a certain brand which is affected strongly by brand preference and brand personality (Jung and Soo 2012). (Uncles, Dowling et al. 2003) noted that brand loyalty have two dimensions: behavioral and attitudinal. A strong attitudinal commitment creates attitudinal loyalty, while partial commitment of customer to a brand creates behavioral loyalty.

According to (Sahin, Zehir et al. 2011), the most crucial advantages of brand loyalty are: making a positive mental perception, creating positive word of mouth, causing more sales and earning more revenues, decreasing consumer’s sensitivity towards attempts of competitors and having less sensitivity towards the change of price.

## 2.3 Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty

(Farhat and Khan 2011) conducted a conceptual study in order to investigate the variables which lead to customer loyalty and willingness of customers to be loyal and having purchasing behavior toward a brand. An in-depth review in literature was done through review of factors that enhance customer loyalty toward a brand. (Farhat and Khan 2011) reviewed the studies related to brand personality and among them, they highlighted introduced model by (Aaker 1997) of which brand personality has five dimensions those are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Then , (Farhat and Khan 2011) reviewed definition and studies related to brand loyalty such as (Jacoby and Olson 1970) of which proposed the first

definition of the brand loyalty and the most complete one. Finally, (Farhat and Khan 2011) reviewed the relationship between brand personality according to previous studies such as (Guo 2003) which supported that brand personality has positive significant influence on brand preference. Besides, as stated in the study by (Farhat and Khan 2011), research by (Mengxia 2007) investigated that brand personality has positive and significant determination on brand preference, attitude, loyalty, and intentional behavior of customers. Conclusion is that the developed conceptual model of the study by (Farhat and Khan 2011) depicted that brand personality and its dimension by (Aaker 1997) has impact and lead to enhancing customer loyalty. conceptual study with (Farhat and Khan 2011) have been really practical and have had its own contribution for academics and scholars in this research era.

(Teimouri, Fanae et al. 2016) Conducted a research in the province of Isfahan (located in Iran) entitled “Studying the Relationship between Brand Personality and Customer Loyalty: A Case Study of Samsung Mobile Phone” with the purpose of exploring the relationship between brand personality and customer loyalty. In order to achieve the aim of the research, (Teimouri, Fanae et al. 2016) took quantitative approach involving distribution of 150 questionnaires among customer of Samsung Mobile Phone in Isfahan, Iran. The research model within the study conducted by (Teimouri, Fanae et al. 2016) consists of one independent variable that is brand personality and its dimensions and a dependent variable which is brand loyalty. Therefore, it can be stated that research problem in the study is referred to the brand loyalty. It is notable that brand personality consists of five dimensions as proposed by (Aaker 1997) which are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Authors designed the questionnaire based on introduced scale by (Aaker 1997) involving 18 items for brand personality and scale introduced by (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001) involving 12 items for brand loyalty. After, completion of data collection, in order to testing hypotheses of the study; (Teimouri, Fanae et al. 2016) utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) through Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) Program. Findings of their study revealed that there is a significant relationship among brand personality dimensions and customer loyalty. It is worthwhile mentioning that the correlation coefficient between brand personality and brand loyalty was equal with 0.79 of which is a positive and significant finding. Finally, it can be asserted that research by (Teimouri, Fanae et al. 2016) brought initial insights for Samsung company, retailers of Smartphone and official and registered offices of Samsung mobile phone in Iran, especially province of Isfahan in order to increase brand or customer loyalty to the Samsung brand.

Referring to the above literature, it can be deduced that relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty has attracted scholars’ attention and many studies have been conducted in this research era. In addition, previous studies support that brand personality plays a pivotal role in enhancing brand loyalty.

## **2.4 Statement of Research Problem**

In the competitive era among producers of Smartphone such as Apple, Samsung, Sony and others, nowadays; everybody believes that Apple Company has dominated the market due to its brand quality, brand personality, brand image and other important factors. Apple Company has official representative office under the name of “Apple Store” in many countries and customers can register the products of this company and benefit from after sales service offered by Apple Store. Since Iran is under the sanction by United States of America (USA), therefore; there is no official representative office in Iran. This is a salient issue to take into consideration, because

many Iranian customers should purchase products from other countries or importing registered products of Apple Company in an illegal way. According to the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, officials in Iran especially in Tehran as capital city of Iran; announced that “Apple that it must open an office in Iran or face a nationwide ban on all Apple products. “If Apple does not register an official representative office in Iran, all phones produced by this company will be confiscated from stores,” said Abbas Nakhaei, the head of Iran's Anti-Smuggling Task Force, in an interview with the hardline Tasnim News Agency on July 17, 2016 (Source: <https://goo.gl/BmgHKn>). In addition, it is notable to mention that Apple products such as iPhone Smartphone have attracted customers in Iran and being loyal to the Apple Company is a salient issue in this case. This issue provides a new opportunity to conduct a study on the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty. Since lack of study to date has addressed a study in this research era especially in Tehran, Iran; Authors of this article or research have been motivated to conduct a research among consumers of iPhone Smartphone in order to determine the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty.

## 2.5 Research Model

The model of this study which indicates the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty is based on the literature review of point number 2.3. Brand personality as independent variable and its dimensions are based on model developed by (Aaker 1997) also, the scale of brand loyalty as dependent variable is based on (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001).

Research model is shown in the following:

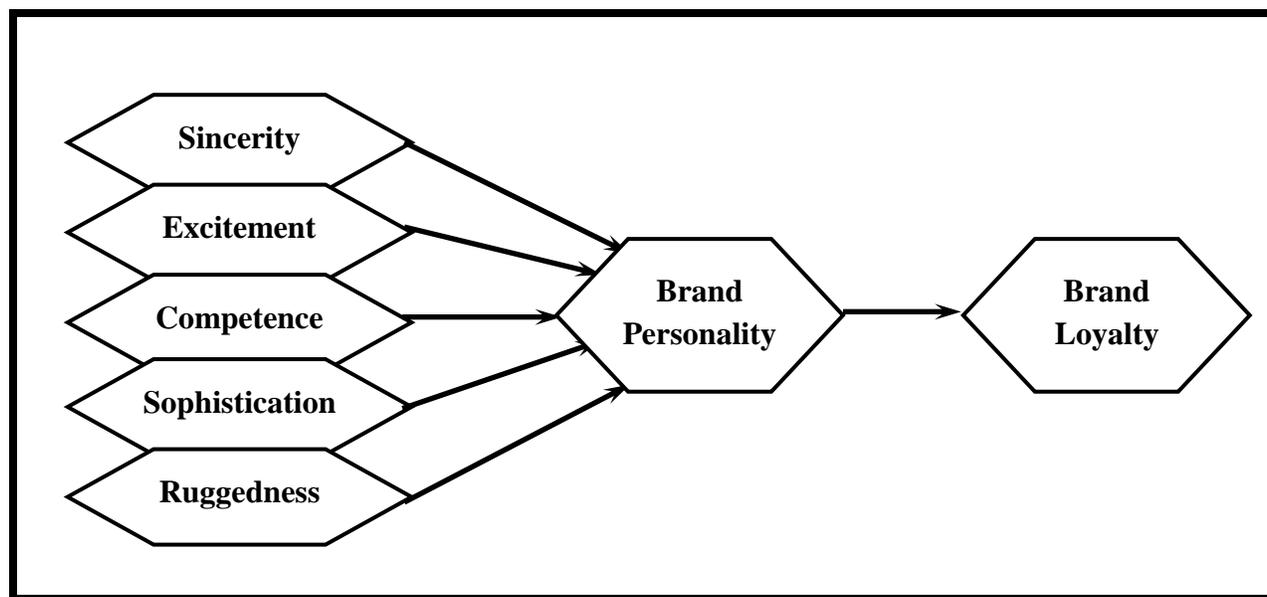


Fig 2: Research model based on (Aaker 1997) and (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001)

## 2.6 Research Questions

According to the research model depicted in Figure - 2, the research questions (RQs) of this research are as followings:

RQ1: Is sincerity having a positive relationship with brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran?

RQ2: Is excitement having a positive relationship with brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran?

RQ3: Is competence having a positive relationship with brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran?

RQ4: Is sophistication having a positive relationship with brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran?

RQ5: Is ruggedness having a positive relationship with brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran?

## **2.7 Hypothesis Development**

Referring to the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty according to the review of previous studies and model of the study, the hypothesis of this study is developed as following:

***H1: There is a positive relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran.***

## **2.8 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to determine the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran (Capital city of Iran). In order to achieve the main objective, all of the research questions should be answered, and the hypothesis should be tested. Thus, the supporting objectives are as followings:

1. To identify the relationship between sincerity and brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran.
2. To identify the relationship between excitement and brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran.
3. To identify the relationship between competence and brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran.
4. To identify the relationship between sophistication and brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran.
5. To identify the relationship between ruggedness and brand personality among customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In the research methodology, at first; method of the study and data collection procedure will be explained. Consequently, questionnaire design will be brought and finally required statistical tests for data analysis in IBM SPSS Version 22 will be stated.

### 3.1 Quantitative Approach

This study is based on a quantitative approach, involving distribution of questionnaires. The target population or statistical population is consumers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran. The data collection was done during July –August 2016 and total of 230 complete questionnaires were gathered. It is worthwhile mentioning that data collection procedure faced with time constraint in order to finalize the research. Another salient point to highlight is that corresponding author of this research distributed questionnaires by probability random sampling technique of which there is no bias for selecting respondent.

### 3.2 Questionnaire Development

Development of questionnaire is based on independent variable and dependent variable. Referring to the research model, brand personality is independent variable that consists of five dimensions as mentioned earlier. Brand loyalty is dependent variable.

As outlined in the literature review, (Aaker 1997) proposed five dimensions for brand personality. The scale introduced by (Aaker 1997) is a valid and highly cited scale for measuring brand personality. Five-dimensional scale proposed by (Aaker 1997) includes 18 items or questions. 4 items for sincerity, 5 items for excitement, 3 items for competence, 4 items for sophistication, and 2 items for ruggedness.

In order to measure brand loyalty, scale introduced by (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001) including 12 items was used. It is notable that this is also a valid and highly cited scale for measuring brand loyalty.

All questions or items were rated on a five-point frequency-based scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree).

### 3.3 Plan of Data Analysis

Analysis of data or data processing in this study is based on IBM SPSS Version 22. according to the (Coakes and Steed 2009), IBM SPSS, formerly known as SPSS, is a sophisticated piece of software used by social scientists and related professionals for statistical analysis (Coakes and Steed 2009).

In order to initiating data processing, answering research questions, testing formulated hypothesis and hopefully achieving the major and supporting research objectives, different kinds of statistical tests should be run in IBM SPSS Version 22 which are: firstly, reliability test should be run in order to calculate Cronbach's alpha. The acceptable level should have a result from 0.6 to 1.0. In fact, the higher value indicates the better result and represents acceptable internal consistency for dimensions, independent and dependent variables of the questionnaire. Secondly, correlation test should be run in order to identify the relationship between brand personality and each of its dimensions according to the collected data from customers in Tehran, Iran. This statistical test answers RQs of the study. Thirdly, standard regression analysis should be conducted in order to identify the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty according to the scope of the study and testing developed hypothesis of current study (**H1**).

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As stated earlier, reliability test, correlation tests, standard regression analysis will be run in IBM SPSS Version 22. Data processing and findings of this study for total collected data from customers of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran will be interpreted as following.

### 4.1 Reliability Test

The Cronbach's alpha values were measured separately for each dimension of brand personality, and the brand personality scale and brand loyalty were then measured as well. The Cronbach's alpha value for the overall brand personality questionnaire was **.904**, and for brand loyalty was **.841**; this represented sufficient reliability to conduct the study. Table 1 indicates the Cronbach's alpha results obtained via the SPSS software.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Dimension or Variable	Cronbach's alpha value	No. of Items
Sincerity	<b>.803</b>	4
Excitement	<b>.801</b>	5
Competence	<b>.809</b>	3
Sophistication	<b>.689</b>	4
Ruggedness	<b>.702</b>	2
Brand Personality	<b>.904</b>	18
Brand Loyalty	<b>.841</b>	12

### 4.2 Correlation Tests for Brand Personality and its Dimensions

According to the correlation test between each dimension of brand personality and brand personality, the results of R which has a range (-1, +1) for correlation tests are positive and significant. Thus, it can be asserted that all dimensions have positive and significant relationship with brand personality and RQs are answered. Table 2 represents related information.

Table2: Results of Correlation Tests

	Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Brand Personality	<b>R= .698</b>	<b>R= .888</b>	<b>R= .882</b>	<b>R= .827</b>	<b>R= .419</b>
N	230	230	230	230	230

### 4.3 Standard Regression Analysis for Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty

According to the model summary table, R and R square are **.734** and **.539** respectively. In the model summary table, when R and R square are close to 1, it represents that there is a high linear regression between independent variable that is brand personality and dependent variable which is brand loyalty. As can be seen in the model summary table, R square is **.539**. This value represents that the model is interpreting **53.9 %** variance in dependent variable which is brand loyalty. Table 3 contains all related information.

Table3: Model Summary for Linear Standard Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	<b>.734<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>.539</b>	.537	.24042

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Personality

b. Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

ANOVA table for the standard regression analysis for brand personality and brand loyalty shows that F- value is significant which has a result of **266.085** and P-value (Sig.) is equal with **.000** which is an acceptable result and it is less than acceptable level which is .05. Table 4 shows relevant information.

Table4: ANOVA Table for Linear Standard Regression Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.380	1	15.380	<b>266.085</b>	<b>.000<sup>b</sup></b>
	Residual	13.178	228	.058		
	Total	28.558	229			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Personality

In standard regression analysis or in other sentence in regression analysis, the most important table is related to coefficient table. Standardized Coefficient Beta is one of the most values to take into consideration during interpretation of data analysis. Beta coefficient indicates contribution or determination of independent variable on dependent variable. The higher positive value for beta coefficient is better. According to the following coefficient table, standardized coefficient beta is equal with **.734**. Therefore, brand personality has a great and positive impact on brand loyalty in this study and **H1** is confirmed and strongly supported. Table 5 contains relevant information.

Table5: Coefficient Table for Linear Standard Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.138	.208		5.473	.000
	Brand Personality	.744	.046	<b>.734</b>	16.312	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1 Major Conclusions**

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty in the field of iPhone Smartphone in Tehran, Iran. The findings confirmed that brand personality has a strong impact on brand loyalty, in other words, brand personality in terms of iPhone Smartphone is effective on customer loyalty in Tehran, Iran. Furthermore, the results of this study are in line with previous studies conducted by (Teimouri, Fanae et al. 2016) and (Farhat and Khan 2011). As a result, in order to sustain iPhone Smartphone in the mobile phone market, while there is no Apple Store as the official representative office in Iran, this Company should take a logical marketing strategy to sustain its brand personality.

Clearly, the company and retailers should consider and highlight its brand personality to create more value for their customers. In fact, companies can enhance brand loyalty by considering each dimension of brand personality. Therefore, it makes not only to bring new customers for its brand but to retain the current customers for long time or may be forever.

### **5.2 Managerial Implications**

This research is useful for scholars who are concerned about relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty and will be useful for managers of Apple Company in order to maintain and enhance high level of loyalty among consumers of iPhone Smartphone. In reality, the result of this study can be useful for executive marketing managers in the context of iPhone Smartphone market. To achieve long term profitability, creating and maintaining loyal customers are really important. Sales and revenues can be increased by producing Smartphone based on personalities of consumers and their needs. To sum up, a good strategic management in this field can lead to gaining more profitability for company because creating more attractive brand personality, making more loyal customers.

### **5.3 Limitations and Avenues for Future Studies**

This study had some limitations in terms of time, sample size and lack of cooperation of iPhone users. Further, this study was exclusively conducted in Tehran which is a limitation of this research; suggestion for future research is extending to cover the whole of Iran, even larger sample size in Tehran. Also, a comparison between two brands of Smartphone users could be recommended for future research.

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