Iconic brands have the potential to take on sacral aspects that elicit consumer devotion and strong loyalty. Just a few weeks after introduction, it became evident that Apple’s iPhone was such a brand. This paper presents two sides of the iPhone euphoria. From the U.S. market, we present an interpretive analysis of the devotion, cultism and conflicted emotions among iPhone innovators. Not only iPhone devotees express elation with and admiration for the brand, the deity-like character of the brand motivates them to overlook flaws and to defend their faith diligently against doubters. In Asia, iPhone services were not available even a year after the product launch, and this spawned a gray market culture characterized by unauthorized unlocking of iPhone by rebellious hackers and the Robin Hood-like admiration of the rebels by lay consumers. The brand culture of iPhone is being shaped by intersections of these strands of devotion, desire, and rebellious co-creation.

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SHORT ABSTRACT
Iconic brands have the potential to take on sacral aspects that elicit consumer devotion and strong loyalty. Just a few weeks after introduction, it became evident that Apple’s iPhone was such a brand. This paper presents two sides of the iPhone euphoria. From the U.S. market, we present an interpretive analysis of the devotion, cultism and conflicted emotions among iPhone innovators. Not only iPhone devotees express elation with and admiration for the brand, the deity-like character of the brand motivates them to overlook flaws and to defend their faith diligently against doubters. In Asia, iPhone services were not available even a year after the product launch, and this spawned a gray market culture characterized by unauthorized unlocking of iPhone by rebellious hackers and the Robin Hood-like admiration of the rebels by lay consumers. The brand culture of iPhone is being shaped by intersections of these strands of devotion, desire, and rebellious co-creation.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Iconic brands have the potential to take on sacral aspects that elicit consumer devotion and strong loyalty. Just a few weeks after introduction, it became evident that Apple’s iPhone was a highly sought and devotion-inspiring iconic brand. This paper presents two sides of the iPhone euphoria. From the U.S. market, we present an interpretive analysis of the devotion, cultism and conflicted emotions among iPhone innovators. Not only iPhone devotees expressed elation with and admiration for the brand, the deity-like character of the brand motivated them to overlook flaws and to defend their faith diligently against doubters. In Asia, iPhone services were not available even a year after the product launch, and this spawned a gray market culture characterized by unauthorized unlocking of iPhone by rebellious hackers and the Robin Hood-like admiration of the rebels by lay consumers. In the Asian settings, at least for some temporary period, idolatry of the iconic brand was displaced away from the brand-owning corporation; and consumer adulation was directed at the hacker-rebel-hero. For the brand-owning corporation, intense desirability and devotion bode well for the market success. The inability to provide the legitimate version of the brand globally, however, creates openings for rebellious hacker co-creators. With the spreading rebel co-creation expertise, competitive spaces could open up for copycat brands as well as for anarchic consumer-controlled market segments where the brand liturgy falls on deaf ears. The brand culture of iPhone is being shaped by intersections of these strands of devotion, desire, and rebellious co-creation.