



Ticket to mayhem

The highly anticipated Coldplay concert, part of their Music of the Spheres World Tour, is set to take place at Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium in January 2025. Despite three scheduled shows on January 18, 19, and 21, with a total venue capacity of 1.5 lakh, over 1.3 crore fans logged in to BookMyShow for the sale. The rush overwhelmed the platform, resulting in tickets selling out within 30 minutes. Fans were left frustrated as they encountered glitches, virtual queues, and a limited supply of tickets, sparking concerns about scalping and ticket resale scams. **Maira Shadab, AIS Vas 6, XA** highlights a growing trend of ticket scalping in India.

What: Scalpers' paradise

The original ticket prices ranged from 2,000 INR to 35,000 INR. However, the resale market saw massive markups. For example, a 12,500 INR ticket was listed at 3.36 lakh INR - a 2,700% increase - while standing tickets priced at 6,450 INR were being resold for 50,000 INR. Lounge tickets, initially sold at 35,000 INR, were found on secondary platforms like Viagogo for 10 lakh INR, marking an almost 30-fold hike. Or in other words, ticket scalping at its best. Ticket scalping relies on the economics of limited supply and ex-

cess demand, and refers to the illegal flipping of ticket prices in order to financially exploit the buyers. Also known as ticket touting, it is the act of buying tickets in bulk for an event and then selling them at inflated prices. This creates an artificial shortage in the market and leads to disappointment for the genuine fans. In 2023 alone, the global secondary ticket market was valued at approximately 15 billion USD, proving that this illegal activity is growing at an exponential rate.

Where: Other affected events

The issue of ticket scalping isn't limited to Coldplay's concert. Similar scams have emerged around Diljit Dosanjh's Dil-Luminati tour in Delhi, where tickets were resold on Zomato for 14,000 INR - a massive increase from regular prices. Even the 2023 IPL season saw scalpers arrested by Chennai Police for selling 10,000 INR tickets at 50,000 INR. With India's massive fan base for music and sports, scalpers see significant opportunities to exploit ticket shortages and drive up resale prices. In the 2008 Beijing Olympics, scalpers used stolen identities to buy hundreds of tickets for resale, and today, India faces very similar challenges with the lack of strong anti-scalping laws.

Who: Impact on fans

Coldplay's concert tickets went on sale at noon on BookMyShow, and the overwhelm-

ing demand caused technical disruptions almost immediately. Many users, including content creator Simone Khambatta, reported being pushed to the back of the virtual queue despite accessing the sale early. BookMyShow acknowledged the disruptions, citing 'suspicious and malicious traffic' as a cause, but assured that they resolved the issues within minutes. Despite these efforts, fans expressed frustration, feeling disadvantaged by the flawed system. The resale market was active just hours after the official sale, with tickets surfacing on platforms like Viagogo at exorbitant prices. Social media also saw individuals offering 'extra' tickets at inflated rates, creating risks of fake or invalid sales. This quick escalation from official sale to black market highlights how scalpers are capitalising on high-profile events in India.

Why: Scalping and systemic loopholes

Scalping thrives on the economics of high demand and limited supply. Scalpers use automated bots to bulk-buy tickets from platforms like BookMyShow, bypassing virtual queues and human buyers. According to industry reports, bots can purchase tickets 1,000 times faster than human users, with estimates suggesting that up to 40% of online ticket purchases are made by these automated scripts. Scalpers then resell these tickets on secondary platforms

at significant markups, creating an artificial scarcity to drive prices higher.

How: Solutions and lessons learned

Countries like the US and UK have implemented legal frameworks to combat scalping. The US introduced the Better Online Ticket Sales (BOTS) Act of 2016, which bans bots from buying event tickets and imposes penalties on violators. The UK limits resale prices to a maximum of 10% above the original value to protect consumers. However, India currently lacks similar legislation, making it difficult to curb this growing issue. BookMyShow has taken steps to improve its platform, but fans need to stay vigilant. To avoid scams, buyers should only purchase tickets directly from official sources. BookMyShow also advises against relying on resale platforms and warns that significant deviations from the original prices are red flags. Until stronger regulations are implemented, fans are urged to exercise caution and patience when booking tickets for high-demand events. With ticket scalping on the rise and events like Coldplay and IPL attracting massive crowds, the situation calls for tighter control over ticket sales to prevent exploitation and ensure that fans can enjoy their favourite performances without breaking the bank.

