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Liquid



Bar Takeovers

The Shakedown

Soju

Korean Spirit

Spirits
Barrel Made





The Takeover Shakedown

On any given night, stepping into a bar might mean either craft drinks, straight up wild nights, or catching up with friends. It could also mean a glimpse into another city, another philosophy, or even another country's drinking culture.

Bar takeovers – global collaborations and homegrown exchanges – have set a new benchmark in an ever-evolving bar landscape. Bars are rethinking their client engagement. Patrons are being offered a chance to experience much more in their favourite drinking spots. Takeovers have become more than just a way to generate buzz and are serving as a strategic tool to attract new audiences.

Atul Tiwari of The Leela Palace New Delhi introduced bar takeovers in 2022 to be a catalyst for growth and reinvention. “Our goal has been to position The Library Bar as a melting pot of global bar experiences,” he explains. While The Library Bar has long been celebrated for its classic cocktails, these collaborations have infused a fresh wave of creativity and patron loyalty.

These collaborations infuse a fresh wave of creativity and patron loyalty, elevating the bar experience for everyone involved.

Yet, beyond the spectacle of a guest bartender behind the stick, what makes a takeover truly successful? And how do they impact business, brand identity, and long-term strategy of a bar?

WHEN COLLABORATION BEGETS INNOVATION

At their core, bar takeovers are creative exchanges, allowing bartenders to step outside their usual setups and experiment. At Akina in Mumbai, they have evolved from simple showcases to immersive experiences where guest bartenders and in-house teams co-create menus that blend their styles. This unique approach offers guests an ever-changing selection of cocktails that reflect both the host bar's identity and the visiting bartender's signature.

Some bars use takeovers as testing grounds for new ideas – creating innovative presentations with a mix of local ingredients and global techniques. Hakkasan Mumbai, for example, selects mixologists known for their distinctive approach to cocktail-making. While guests are introduced to exclusive drinks, the in-house team can learn from visiting bartenders, absorb new techniques and perspectives that can influence their own menu development.

For Diganta Chakraborty of The Soul Company, takeovers began as a passion project. “We started doing bar takeovers right after the pandemic, not because it was a business trend but because we craved great cocktails and the energy of bars we loved abroad.” The model evolved into strategic exchanges in Asia and now, Europe. Unlike one-off collaborations, these takeovers are establishing long-term relationships between international and Indian bar teams, thereby creating a permanent stage for continuous learning and creative exchange.

TAKING OVER THE BUSINESS

Takeovers serve as definitive, forward-thinking marketing tools. Their exclusivity – typically lasting one to three days – attracts a diverse audience. They



The Eau Bar

#guestshiftalert

Sofokli Cali

Evis Cali

26TH JUNE
8:30 PM ONWARDS

FROM ALBANIA
NOUVELLE VAGUE
AT SIDECAR

BACARDI v o® RESERVA

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draw in curious first-timers eager to experience an international bar at home, and industry professionals who see them as prime opportunities for networking and learning. Besides increasing footfall and engagement, they often turn into highly shareable social media moments.

Luxury hotels have refined takeovers into structured, high-impact collaborations. The Leela Palace New Delhi has a strategic partnership with The Soul Company, securing top-tier guest bartenders and aligning takeovers with their long-term brand vision for The Library Bar. At The Oberoi Mumbai, takeovers have gone beyond just guest shifts – The Eau Bar is positioned as a global lifestyle destination, where international talent, curated menus, and high-touch service come together for an experiential experience. These partnerships ensure that takeovers benefit all involved – the host bar, guest bartenders, and the brands that support them.

Sponsorship is playing a crucial role in scaling these events. Large spirits brands now actively back takeovers, recognising them as prime opportunities to showcase their products in high-profile settings.



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Consumer behaviour – a key driver in the bar industry – is also being influenced. Guests are encouraged to explore unfamiliar cocktail styles. “India’s bar scene is witnessing a revolution! Traditional preferences are giving way to adventurous tastes, making cocktail bars the new hotspot,” says Nitin Tewari of BarTrender. Local ingredients are increasingly in demand, as are global trends. Tequila, emerging as a preferred choice, has played a pivotal role in not only driving interest in visually striking cocktails but also cementing the popularity of international trends like the picante in India.

IT’S NOT ALL HUNKY-DORY!

Of course, not every bar takeover is a success. Logistical challenges can range from sourcing rare ingredients to navigating alcohol regulations, particularly in cities where import restrictions limit access to premium spirits, vermouths, and bitters. Recipes need to be adapted and local substitutes found to maintain integrity of these menus.

Takeovers demand extensive coordination, from ensuring seamless bar operations to navigating differences in service styles. Visa issues, language barriers, and aligning expectations can also add complexity, particularly when international teams are involved. Understanding the local audience is critical. More importantly – though rarely done often enough – pre-event research and testing are crucial for a successful takeover.

It takes much more than the guest bartender and his/her creations. A well-matched collaboration is key, where the visiting bar’s ethos aligns with the host venue’s identity. Vikram Achanta of Tulleeho believes, “the host bar not setting expectations of the Indian consumer’s cocktail perception may backfire.” He adds that bars that integrate regional flavours or theatrical elements – whether through storytelling or presentation – create more memorable experiences.

SHAKING UP A NEW ERA

Can the trend be sustained? A year ago, takeovers were happening almost everywhere – sometimes



multiple times a month – but the novelty wore off. Once the hype settled, only some created real buzz. This shift has led to fewer but more thoughtfully executed takeovers, ensuring they remain special.

Bar takeovers have evolved from fleeting trends into catalysts for collaboration and cultural exchange. More than just a chance to shake up cocktails in a different setting, they’ve become essential touch points for bars to introduce global influences while offering guests a world-class experience without leaving home.

Not all takeovers are created equal. While I notice some takeovers replicate their ‘home’ menu, the more successful ones create experiences that are organic to the space while retaining the essence of the brand. It’s about going deep into the annals of ingredient sourcing – which really flies with the audience – and ensuring it is an act of integration rather than an intrusion. Without this, even the most celebrated bartenders risk their cocktails feeling out of place.

As India’s bar scene matures and takeovers becoming more strategic and refined, their influence positions

KEY BAR TAKEOVERS

- The Eau Bar at The Oberoi Mumbai with Saverio Casella & James Iain of Jigger & Pony (Singapore)
- The Library Bar at The Leela Palace New Delhi with Tony Pescatori (London)
- Hakkasan Mumbai with Camparino (Italy), Backdoor Bodega (Malaysia) and Copitas (Bangalore).
- ZLB23 at The Leela Palace Bengaluru with Paradiso (Barcelona) and COA (Hong Kong)
- Koi Bar at St. Regis Mumbai with Cassandra and Coleen of Republic (Singapore)
- AMPM Bar, Kolkata with Elliot Faber (A Sake Samurai) and Beckaly Franks (Hong Kong).
- Akina Mumbai with Iki (Dubai)

India as a serious player in the global cocktail movement. This transformation is evident at many bar takeovers running today, inspiring a collaborative legacy that many bars continue to uphold. [TL](#)

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