

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Shangri-La sets the stage for romance with product placement

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*The 14th season finale of The Bachelorette was filmed at the Maldives resort. Image credit: Shangri-La*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Shangri-La Villingili Resort and Spa, Maldives will be featured prominently in a televised love story, giving the exotic location an opportunity to shine in the eyes of millions of romance lovers.

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The season finale of ABC's "The Bachelorette" was filmed at the resort earlier this year. Exposure from the reality show and subsequent press coverage has the potential to attract new guests to the Shangri-La location, and others around the globe.

"Shangri-La's Villingili Resort and Spa in the Maldives offers couples one of the most romantic travel getaways in the world," said Judy Reeves, director of public relations at [Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts](#), The Americas. "The beauty of Shangri-La's resort in the Maldives will be seen by viewers across the U.S. and in international markets as well, as the show is broadcast in a large number of countries around the globe."

### Romantic getaways

The Bachelorette finale will follow Becca Kufrin's final dates with her remaining suitors at the Villingili Resort and Spa. Like most finales in the reality romance franchise, it is expected to end with a dramatic proposal.

While the Maldives is the setting for the season's finale, The Bachelorette has already traveled to a variety of locales during its whirlwind romance, including the Bahamas and Thailand.

"The Bachelor and Bachelorette franchise has always done an excellent job filming each location in a way that inspires one to want to travel there," said Tiffany Dowd, founder and president of [Luxe Social Media](#), Boston.



*Shangri-La hopes to attract more couples to its Maldives resort. Image credit: Shangri-La*

One of Ms. Kufrin's final dates is aboard Shangri-La's Horizon yacht. She also goes swimming and paddle boarding in a lagoon with one of her suitors.

The crew took advantage of the tropical setting, and filmed Ms. Kufrin on romantic strolls around the island. Expansive shots of the resort are featured throughout the teaser for the show's finale.



*Shangri-La's water villas are seen in the background of The Bachelorette proposal. Image credit: ABC*

"We believe that stunning footage of the blue Indian Ocean waters, the white sandy beaches, the luxury yacht and the private villas will inspire viewers to learn more about the destination and more about Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts," Shangri-La's Ms. Reeves said.

Being featured on *The Bachelorette* can contribute to the resort's reputation as a romantic destination for couples, as opposed to a hotspot for adventurers or families.

"Shangri-La will benefit from this exposure by creating huge brand awareness as a resort ideal for honeymoons and romantic getaways," Luxe Social Media's Ms. Dowd said.

#### Product placements

Pitching romantic destinations for *The Bachelor* franchise is a big business.

According to the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#), Virginia Tourism Corp. paid ABC more than \$500,00 for the show to film in the state capitol. That midseason episode was watched by more than 5 million viewers.

"It can be very expensive for the hotels to host the cast during filming, and it is uncertain if the hotel will actually see an increase in future bookings because of this exposure," Ms. Dowd said. "The publicity, however, will be good for the hotel and the destination, creating more awareness."

Product placement is not a new tactic for luxury brands.

In addition to coordinated placement, luxury companies make appearances both in scripted shows and reality television. Tie-ins with television shows offer a chance to bring a viewing audience to a brand's channels ([see story](#)).

Television combines sound and video to create a strong message, often with emotion. In-show TV placement could also provide luxury brands an opportunity to share the lifestyle or experiences associated with the brand via digital

channels ([see story](#)).

Luxury brands, including hospitality groups, must be selective with their product placement initiatives and target the right audience.

"Luxury resorts can benefit from product placement in reality TV shows, however, there is always the possibility that the storyline, cast members and their image may not be reflective of the brand," Ms. Dowd said. "It is important that luxury resorts carefully review the type of exposure they may get to avoid any surprises."

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