

# THOMSON AND FIRST CHOICE ANNOUNCE SIGNIFICANT RETAIL EXPANSION

Submitted by: TUI UK

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UK's largest travel brands buck trend by opening new high street shops

While experts are indicating that the number of empty shops on Britain's high streets has risen - the percentage currently stands at 12.4%, up from 10% in the middle of 2009, Thomson (<http://www.thomson.co.uk>) and First Choice (<http://www.firstchoice.co.uk>) have today outlined plans to open approximately 30 new shops over the next two years.

Nick Longman, Distribution Director, Thomson and First Choice said: "We have been listening to our customers and many of them have said they want face to face contact when booking and researching holidays."

The findings are further confirmed by a report published last month suggesting that the retail travel industry has every reason to be optimistic. The number of adults using a travel agent has increased by 6% between 2005 and 2009.

Longman continues: "The popularity of booking holidays through shops should not be to the detriment of other booking channels. The web and call centre, as methods for researching and booking holidays, continue to play a vital role.

"However, many consumers see the benefits of having a travel agent to do the work for them. This can be for a number of reasons. Whether they value the knowledge an agent can give them or they want the reassurance of having an expert make the booking. There are also a growing number of people who simply do not have time to undertake the research involved, so want to enlist the help of a third party."

Having only recently embarked on a re-branding programme for 40 First Choice Holiday Hypermarkets to either Thomson or First Choice Holiday Superstores, the expansion proposals are good news for the travel industry and underline the company's confidence in the retail sector.

Locations for the new stores are yet to be announced.

-ENDS-

Video News Release on the announcement can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k32rEI32FQQ>

If you would like to host the video on your website it is available in wmv, mov and flv formats

Interview requests now being taken

Sources:

1. The Local Data Company – February 2010
2. Mintel, Holidays - Attitudes and the Impact of Recession - UK January 2010

For further details or interview requests, please contact:

Andy Cockburn, 01582 645 417 or email: [Andy.Cockburn@thomson.co.uk](mailto:Andy.Cockburn@thomson.co.uk) or

Kate Lomax, 01582 645 189 or email: [Kate.Lomax@thomson.co.uk](mailto:Kate.Lomax@thomson.co.uk)