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## Growing in style

Girls' clothing retailer expands into B.C.

Triple Flip, a Calgary retailer specializing in clothes for younger girls, is expanding again, moving into the B.C. market with two new stores.

The locations in West Vancouver, which launched last weekend, and Surrey, opening next month, brings the chain to eight stores across the country, highlighting a growth strategy that wins approval from experts.

"It looks like this company is very careful about how they're going to grow and where they're going to grow," said Debi Andrus, assistant professor of marketing at the University of Calgary's Haskayne School of Business. "They've hit a really great target market."

Moves such as encouraging customers to submit design ideas shows they know their audience, Andrus believes.

She said they seem to be following in the footsteps of other Calgary retail success stories, such as Swimco, Forzani and Mark's Work Warehouse.

Triple Flip, founded in 2005 by Linda Maslechko and Mona Rae Peterson, is keeping all its stores as corporate entities. "We're careful about our expansion," Maslechko said. "The brand is very important to us. We do get lots of requests for franchises, but we don't think that will represent the brand well."

She added that they continue to look at further expansion within Canada, including other locations in Toronto and Vancouver, as well as the possibility of opening in Ottawa and Winnipeg.

"We look at opportunities as they come available,"

Maslechko said.

David Finch, assistant professor at Mount Royal University, said not franchising allows the company to retain better control over its brand and distribution. "It's much more controlled growth," he said. "With corporate stores you have total control of the assets, distribution, training, the customer experience."

He points to Lululemon's rapid expansion, which saw the athletic wear chain struggle with shipping issues and not being able to serve the demand fast enough.

Triple Flip started with a focus on activewear for preteen girls, finding a gap in the market between children's clothes and adult styles that came in smaller sizes.

Maslechko said while there have been inquiries about whether they will expand their lines to include larger sizes and clothes for boys, they are sticking to what they know.

"No one serves the tween girl," she said, pointing to the sizing system that runs from 1 through 7, rather than using small and large. "That is our focus, that is all we do. It's what we do really well."

Andrus, however, can envision a day when they may consider expanding their product lines.

"Their target market is going to grow up," she pointed out.

Triple Flip's Calgary store is located in Deerfoot Meadows.

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