



## NIKITAVIEW

The saying that “the only constant in life is change” could not be more true in our ever evolving business and the challenging surrounding circumstances. And seasoned veterans as they are, Nikita are adjusting their canvases to sail with the winds of change. We caught up with Vicki Vasil, Susanne Kinast and Stephie ter Hürne to find out what they’ve set their compass for and where the journey will lead them. **Interview by Anna Langer.**

**Nikita was founded back in the days when there wasn’t much choice for the female boardsports enthusiasts out there and is a brand rooted in “Girls Who Ride”. So, where is the brand headed today?**

**Stephie:** Interviewee name: The girls from those days have evolved. Some have “grown up”, and of course we are always getting new customers as well. While we still offer a dynamic collection for boardsport enthusiastic girls, since our roots and our hearts are always in snow, our girl is multi-active and we have expanded our line to support these activities, with branded fabric technologies and a design that transitions activewear from the studio to the street.

Our customer has also become more fashion-savvy and trend-conscious. Their preferences are reflected in elevated fabrics, prints and colours. But we will always stay true to our DNA and signature

silhouettes that make us unique. As it has always been, whatever the Nikita girls/women do and wherever they are, our wish is to always inspire and celebrate their spirit, their dreams, achievements, and to reflect them in the line.

**In the economic crisis and the subsequent difficult times for the boardsports business, girls collections and budgets were cut a lot and often before anything else. How do you see that as an all-female brand?**

**Susanne:** Interviewee name: Our focus has been to provide top quality design and marketing to maintain a unique presence in our existing retail locations. While some brands struggle to provide a story, we have always put forth a strong and unique design perspective that is unmatched by competitors. And contrary to previous years, in the last few years we are

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excited to see a ton of attention and budgets put towards women’s lines and the birth of women’s exclusive lines all over the world. To us it’s an advantage that the action, active and young contemporary markets are recharging and marketing to our consumer. The challenge we are excited to meet is to have her continue to choose Nikita.

**One of the reasons given for reducing girls collections and budgets is that they don’t buy brands but instead buy cheap from high street chain stores instead. Would you agree?**

**Susanne:** Today girls are not only blurring the lines between streetwear and activewear to create their very own look and style, and varying their vibe rather than pigeonholing themselves as one ‘type’ of girl or another, they are curating a blended wardrobe that includes key pieces from favourite higher end brands with complementary pieces and basics from fast fashion brands. We cannot and will not compete with fast fashion, but will continue to provide unique key pieces that will last beyond a season and hold a special place in our customer’s wardrobe.

**Through the last couple of collections, the lean towards fashion seemed to become stronger and stronger, namely in the Nikita Selektion collection. Are female athletes becoming more fashion oriented or is it more of a general development as mentioned above?**

**Stephie:** The Nikita Selektion collection was an exciting venture into elevated fashion, and while we don’t offer that line anymore, our streetwear aesthetic has grown in a similar vein - it evolved in the same direction as our customers did. We think of it as a journey from ‘streetwear’ into ‘street fashion’. By keeping the focus on our customer we have found ourselves designing for a diverse and exciting group of similarly motivated, spirited, creative, and entrepreneurial women worldwide. And because each girl wears many hats and dress in many different styles, the line has become more integrated to complement that. On the snow and active side of things, we saw the need to expand this offering because our girl doesn’t just snowboard, skate and surf – she participates in a variety of activities that changes day to day.

**How important are the athletes and team riders to the Nikita brand?**

**Vicki:** Our ambassadors—we call them Nikita Nation—are a cross section of the diverse girls and women who embrace and embody the Nikita brand worldwide. Many of them are snowboarders and all of them ride, but they are also artists, writers, musicians and athletes beyond the mountain and they wear all elements of our collection throughout their daily lives. Most importantly they provide the constant and evolving source of inspiration and for our brand and designs.

**What plans do you have for the Nikita brand in the long run?**

**Vicki:** In the long run we want the brand to reach all the fearless, independent and collaborative girls and women out there. Since the genesis of our for-women, by-women brand, Nikita has always been authentic, and throughout the brand journey these past few years, we have evolved the collection alongside our consumer. Ultimately we want to be a top of mind lifestyle brand for a diverse community of these strong, creative women.

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**Are there any new markets you’re planning on entering or is the concept more about solidifying the shares you already have?**

**Susanne:** We definitely want to solidify the shares we already have and we do see great growth opportunities in there. But entering new channels is a goal as well. While we have a strong brand identity within the action sports community we continue to drive brand awareness in the young contemporary and active channels to reach our consumer who shops at all of these types of retail outfits.

**How has the structural set up of the brand and its operation changed over the years and in recent times?**

**Vicki:** In the last few years the brand has been incorporated into the Amer Sports Group and its matrix structure, while maintaining an independent design centre in the US. Most of the sales reps, especially in Europe, have worked with Nikita for a long time, and our design team is still led by founder Heida Birgisdottir, who is supported by long-time design partner David Young, in Iceland. The Amer structure has brought tons of resources, guidance and design and design synergies to the table, and has expanded and strengthened our sales structure.

**How is Nikita sharing Amer assets/resources with Bonfire and Salomon?**

**Vicki:** Nikita’s global headquarters is shared with both Bonfire Outerwear and Salomon Snowboards in Portland, Oregon, which is a creative, collaborative and exciting environment. We are able to take advantage of the strong resources, decades of experience within our management team, and relationships that Amer has with factories all over the world. We worked with Salomon Snowboards, a global leader in snowboard hardgoods technology, to develop our Nikita boards, boots and bindings.

For all of EMEA, Susanne works as Commercial Manager for Bonfire and Nikita, while Stephie is responsible for the marketing of all three brands throughout the entire region. Both share their office with Thorsten Schlossbauer, the new EMEA RCM Salomon Snowboards.

**Please run through the management structure globally and in Europe. Portland HQ:**

VP of Nikita and Bonfire: Frank Aeschbacher  
Operations and Development: Scott Spencer  
Brand Management: Vicki Vasil  
Product Line Management: Jen Irick and Misti Larkin  
Global Ecommerce: Bryan Klavitter

EMEA Brand Marketing: Stephanie ter Huerne  
EMEA Commercial Manager: Susanne Kinast  
Iceland Head of Design: Heida Birgisdottir  
US Sales Manager: Kristen Archdeacon  
Canadian Sales Manager: Chris Nicholls

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