Apple, Blackberry spar over smartphone sales, tablets

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"We think many customers are getting tired of being told what to think

by Apple," RIM co-chief executive Jim Balsillie said in a blog post responding to the comments made on Monday by Jobs.

"For those of us who live outside of Apple's distortion field, we know that seven-inch tablets will actually be a big portion of the market," Balsillie said after Jobs dismissed seven-inch tablets as too small.

Blackberry is developing a touchscreen tablet computer called the PlayBook which features a seven-inch (18-centimeter) screen in a bid to challenge Apple's iPad, which features a nearly 10-inch (25-centimeter) screen.

Jobs, speaking to financial analysts during a conference call on Monday, dismissed seven-inch tablets as "tweeners," saying they were "too big to compete with a smartphone and too small to compete with an iPad."

He suggested makers of seven-inch screens "include sandpaper so users can sand down their fingers" to be able to tap onscreen keys.

Balsillie struck back with criticism of Apple's refusal to allow Adobe's Flash video to play on the iPad.

"We know that Adobe Flash support actually matters to customers who want a real Web experience," he said.

"We also know that while Apple's attempt to control the ecosystem and maintain a closed platform may be good for Apple, developers want more options and customers want to fully access the overwhelming majority of websites that use Flash."

During his earnings call, Jobs also said that the iPhone "handily" outsold BlackBerry during the quarter and he didn't see the RIM handsets catching up any time soon.

Apple sold 14.1 million iPhones during the quarter, up 91 percent from a year ago.

"RIM has achieved record shipments for five consecutive quarters and recently shared guidance of 13.8 to 14.4 million BlackBerry smartphones for the current quarter," Balsillie said.

"Apple's preference to compare its September-ending quarter with RIM's August-ending quarter doesn't tell the whole story because it doesn't take into account that industry demand in September is typically stronger," he said.

"As usual, whether the subject is antennas, Flash or shipments, there is more to the story and sooner or later, even people inside the distortion field will begin to resent being told half a story," the RIM co-CEO said.

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