

Comparisons based on the three grade levels of the 7 x 7 size reveal a further widening of the indifference zone of the consumer (Fig. 8). When the No. 1 tomatoes of this size were compared with all others, there were six categories that consumers regarded as equally acceptable. These ranged from the smallest No. 1 tomatoes through the middle of the size range for the No. 2 grade, and included the two largest sizes of the No. 3 grade. The 5 x 6 size in both the No. 1 and the No. 2 grades was regarded as superior by consumers. The 7 x 7 No. 1 was better than the 6 x 7 or the 7 x 7 size of the No. 3 grade.

Consumers found no tomatoes inferior to the 7 x 7 No. 2 grade, but they did again regard a rather wide assortment of grade-size combinations as equally acceptable. They felt that the 5 x 6 sizes at all grade levels were superior, and that the 6 x 6 size at the same grade level was also a better quality tomato.

The 7 x 7 No. 3 tomato was less desirable than any grade-size combination larger than a 6 x 7. The 7 x 7 No. 1 tomato was also regarded as a superior product by the consumers.

The testing procedure allowed the consideration of only one grade level for the smallest size of tomato normally shipped from Florida—the 7 x 8. When the No. 1 grade of this size was compared with all others, consumers demonstrated an indifference running across all three grade levels and including all except the very largest and best tomatoes (Fig. 9). All of the 5 x 6 sizes

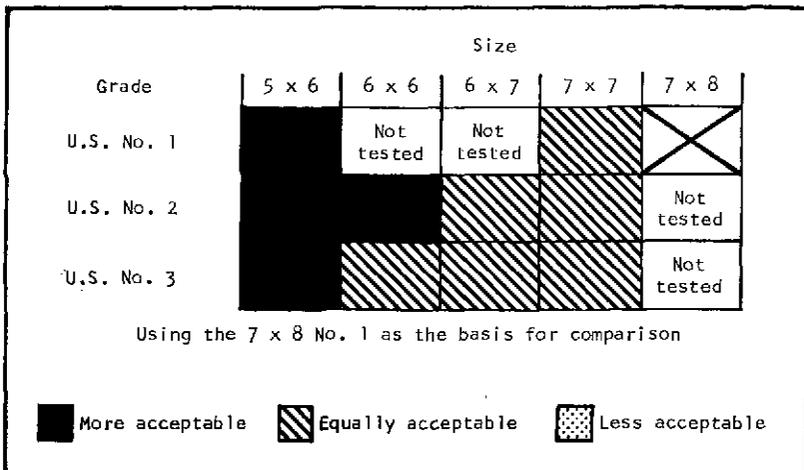


Fig. 9.—Ability of customers to discriminate between size 7 x 8 tomatoes and other grade-size categories.