Service Quality in Rural Market

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Abstract--- In this study the researcher focuses on the rural market, because the rural India is growing fast. 70% of Indian population and 12% of global population live in rural Indian market, and contribute 50% of the country's GDP. The other side of the coin is that service sectors contribute more than 50% of GDP every year. So, regulating and monitoring the quality of their service products is essential. The SERVQUAL plays a major role for checking and indicating the improvement of the quality of services. Most of the researchers frame different quality of services in different sectors like LOGQUAL (hospitality), HOTELQUAL (Lodging), LIBQUAL+ (Libraries), HISTOQUAL (Historic houses), ECOSERV (Eco-tourism), DINSERV (Restaurant) etc. It shows that different service industries need different quality measuring scales for the betterment of their services. Statistics of Indian government reveal that even with the increasing urbanization and migration, 63% of India's population would still be living in rural areas in 2025. At present, most of the Multinational Companies enter into rural markets even in service product. So, there is a necessity to develop a separate service quality measuring scale for rural market. This is the first attempt to design a separate measuring scale for rural market.

Keywords--- Rural Market, SERVQUAL, Service Quality, Urban Market, Services

I.   INTRODUCTION

SERVICES sector has become an important for many economies in the world. After 1991, service industries play a major role in Indian economy. Most of the services sectors are growing very fast compared to the manufacturing sector. Majority of the manufacturing units are depending on services. Mobile phone, Computers, automobile, durable and nondurable products manufacturing units are depending on services like telecommunication, internet, advertising and retailing etc., All service providers need some regulation. Measuring service quality plays a vital role in regulating the service providers. Today service quality is a primary concern for most of the Companies, worldwide. SERVQUAL is an empirically derived method that may be used by services organization to improve the service quality. This method involves the development of an understanding of the perceived service need of the target customers. SERVQUAL takes into an account the perceptions of customers of the relative

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importance of service attributes. This allows an organization to prioritize. SERVQUAL is widely used within service industries to understand the perceptions of target customers regarding their service needs. Perception and expectation are important factors to measure SERVQUAL. These two factors are closely related to the behavior of the customer. Customer behavior will determine the quality of services but their need, wants and requirements will determine the design, functions of the product and services. Predetermining the customer behavior and their requirements both are very difficult to measure.

This study will explore the opportunities of service sectors and importance of services marketing and its contribution in economic development. This testimony will show the Indian rural markets' scope and opportunities. This report will clearly expose the behavior differences between rural and urban consumers. And this research explores the service quality theories, gap analysis, dimensions and pitfalls of SEVQUAL. Finally this study points out the reasons for changes in SERVQUAL.

II.   OVERVIEW OF SERVICE INDUSTRY

The service sector is the most important for most developing economies. It is the largest contributor to gross domestic product, production and employment. Since it is such an important sector, developing economies need to identify their comparative advantage in services. Service sector acts as a base for other sectors and helps in the growth of other sectors. Efficient services infrastructure like telecommunications, banking, insurance and transport would result in the efficient performance of industry and will bring economic success. Access to world-class services would help exporters and producers of developing countries to focus and consolidate on their competitive strength. Growth in services promotes employment within the country and opportunities for professionals overseas. Evidences indicate that liberalization in service sector leads to lower prices, better quality and wider choice for consumers.   As service sector gets liberalized, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows in. Such FDI generally brings with it better human talent, processes and technologies. (Jayesh N Desai)

A.   Different Service Industries

Services are distinct in character as they can be 'n' number of services. There can be Health Care Services, Consulting Services, and Construction Services, for our convenience we have categorized them as: (a) Business Functions, (b) Child Care, (c) Cleaning, Repair and Maintenance Services, (d) Dispute Resolution, (e) Education, (f) Entertainment, (g) Fabric Care, (h) Financial Services, (i) Personal Grooming (Hair dressing), (j) Health Care, (k) Hospitality, (l)

Information Services (m) Risk Management, (n) Social Services, (o) Transport and (p)Public Utility.

B. Importance of Service Sectors

Services sector has become more important for many economies in the world and very important particularly for India. While for the medium and long term, it is important to accelerate the growth of industrial sector particularly manufacturing sector to catch up with the growth of services sector and maintain a decent and stable growth of agricultural sector, which is still subject to the vagaries of nature, in the short and even medium term, the sure bet for higher growth of the Indian economy lies in further accelerating the growth of the services sector, which can be done with considerable ease compared to other sectors. This is evident from the following facts and figures.

i. *GDP Growth:* In India, the growth rates of services in 2006-07 were 11.0%, respectively and are expected to grow at 9.9% in the 11th Plan. Thus the services sector has high potential. Till now, we have been focusing mainly on software. We have many such niche sectors in services. The recent growth in export of professional services is an example of the potential of other services.

ii. *Openness of the Economy:* India's trade in merchandise as a percentage of GDP which is usually used to measure the openness of an economy shows an increase from 14.7% in 1990-91 to 37% in 2006-07.

iii. *FDI in Services:* The world Investment Report 2004 has stated that world over there is a shift in FDI towards services. This is more so with India's FDI inflow to services sector. In 2006-07 services sector (financial & non financial) constituted around 30% of FDI equity inflows compared to the 12.5% in 2004-05.

iv. *Employment and Services:* Most of the studies show that the employment elasticity in the tertiary sector as a whole in the post-reform period (1993-2000) has been 50 per cent higher than in manufacturing sector.

III. THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF SERVICES MARKETING

3.1 Definition of Service

"Activities, benefits and satisfactions, which are offered for sale or are provided in connection with the sale of goods" (American Marketing Association, 1960).

A service is an act or performance offered by one party to another. Although the process may be tied to a physical product, the performance is essentially intangible and does not normally result in ownership of any of the factors of production.

3.1.1 Characteristics of Services

Services are said to have four key characteristics which impact on marketing programmes. They are: (a) Intangibility (b) Inseparability (c) Heterogeneity variability (d) Perishability (simultaneous production/consumption). It is helpful to consider each of these characteristics briefly:

- *Intangibility*: Services are said to be intangible - they cannot be seen or tasted,

- *Inseparability*: Services are produced and consumed at the same time, unlike goods which may be manufactured, then stored for later distribution.

- *Heterogeneity and Invariability*: People make up part of the service offering, it can be argued that a service is always unique; it only exists once, and is never exactly repeated.

- *Perishability*: Services are perishable; they cannot be stored.

3.1.2 Services Marketing Mix

Service Marketing Mix is a role to ensure the service offer to meet the needs of the target market. Each element of the mix is consistent with the other. So, that coherent message is conveyed to the following. The 8P's are

- *Product:* service product are intangible, they are certain physical characteristics which consumers will assess.
- *Price:* Quality of the services determines the price. Pricing includes total price, discounts, mode of payment, price discrimination etc.,
- *Place:* It refers to the accessibility of service provided. Place involves the physical location decisions. Most of the services have been sold directly from producer to consumer. The services are created and marketed simultaneously.
- *Promotion:* Promotion strategy must be used to build an image and reputation. Promotion decisions of a firm must be taken as the nature of the service.
- *People:* The purchase decision is affected by the degree of trust a consumer associates with an organization. It is mostly associated with personal selling. It overlaps with both promotion and distribution.
- *Physical Evidence:* this P arises directly from the intangible nature of the service. Physical entities can be successfully employed to describe the service products and its qualities.
- *Process:* the target audience receive delivery of the service constitutes the process. The service process can be compared with that of operation management implies the conversion. Process by which the services is produced and delivered to the ultimate customer is critical to the success of service operation.
- *Productivity and Quality:* These elements, often treated separately, should be seen as two sides of the same coin. No service firm can afford to address either element in isolation.

3.1.3 Problem Areas in Marketing Services in Rural Marketing

Where the rural market does offer a vast untapped potential, it should also be recognized that it is not that easy to operate in rural market because of several attendant problems. Rural marketing is thus a time consuming affair and requires

considerable investments in terms of evolving appropriate strategies with a view to tackle the problems.

a. *Underdeveloped People and Underdeveloped Markets:* The number of people below poverty line has not decreased in any appreciable manner.

b. *Vastness and Uneven Spread:* The villages are not uniform in size. Nearly 50% of the villages have a population of less than 500 persons which account for 20% of the rural population.

c. *Lack of Proper Physical Communication Facilities:* Nearly fifty percent of the villages in the country do not have all weather roads. Physical communication of these villages is highly expensive.

d. *Low Per Capita Income:* Hence the per capita incomes are low compared to the urban areas. High costs in finance is a stumbling block while higher purchase is unheard of, the small town culture works against financing of products.

e. *Many languages and Dialects:* The number of languages and dialects vary widely from state to state, region to region and probably from district to district.

f. *Low Levels of Literacy:* Literacy rate is low in rural areas as compared to urban areas. This again leads to problem of communication.

g. *Different Way of Thinking:* There is a vast difference in the lifestyles of the people. The rural customer usually has 2 or 3 brands to choose from whereas the urban one has many more choices.

h. *Transport:* Many rural areas are not connected by rail transport. Around 68% of the rural roads have been poorly surfaced, and many are totally destroyed or severely damaged by the monsoon and remain unserviceable leaving interior villages isolated.

i. *Distribution Problem:* Rural markets typically signify complex logistical challenges that directly translate into high distribution cost.

j. *Market Organization and Staff:* The size of the market organization and staff is very important, to have an effective control. Comparatively, catering to rural market will involve large marketing organization and staff.

k. *Media for Rural Communication:* Late 50's and 60's radio was considered to be a potential medium for communication to the rural people. Another mass media is television and cinemas.

3.2 Definition of Service Quality:

According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), service quality must be defined as conformance of customer specifications since it is the customer's definition of quality, not management's. The authors defined perceived service quality as the customer's judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority. Perceived quality differs from objective quality in that it is a form of attitude related to satisfaction and resulting from a comparison between expectations and perceptions of performance (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

3.2.1 Expectations of Service Quality

Customer expectations of service can be influenced or formulated by several factors. Parasuraman et al.(1990) considered the factors that influence customers' formulations of their expectations are words of mouth, personal needs, external communications, and past experience. Customer expectations are preconceived beliefs about a service or product that serve as a standard or reference point against which the service performance is judged (Parasuraman et al., 1993). In their 1998 work, Parasuraman et al., defined expectations as desires or wants that customers feel a service provider "should" offer rather than "would" offer.

3.2.2 Perceptions of Service Quality

How customers perceive service and how they assess the performance of a service is important in understanding overall service quality. Customers' perceptions are subjective assessments of actual service experiences (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Customer perceptions of a service are a complex series of judgments made during and at the end of the experience but are modified by a range of factors including their mood, importance of encounter, etc. the service providers have to be aware of these elements, especially when designing methods of receiving feedback from customers (Williams &Buswell, 2003).

3.2.3 Service Quality Gaps (P-E)

Parasuraman et al. (1990, p. 34) defined service quality to be perceived by customers as "the extent of discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions." The authors developed a SERVQUAL instrument to measure perceptions and expectations of service quality. This instrument was the empirical confirmation of their conception known as the "Gap Model of service quality".

i. After in-depth interviews of executives and a few focus groups in four service categories, Parasuraman et al. (1985) developed service quality model, which identify five gaps between customers and marketers. The five gaps are

ii. Discrepancy between consumer expectations and management perceptions of consumer expectations,

iii. Discrepancy between management perceptions of customer expectation and service quality specifications,

iv. Discrepancy between service quality specifications and service delivery,

v. Discrepancy between service delivery and external communications to customers, and

vi. Discrepancy between customer perceptions of service quality and expectations of service quality.

3.2.4 SERVQUAL

SERVQUAL is a concise multi-item scale that has been shown to produce scores form which valid inferences may be made about service quality in a variety of settings

(Parasuraman et al., 1991). It was created by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml in 1985, and was refined later in 1988, 1991 and 1994 by the same authors. The SERVQUAL instrument consists of 22 expectation questions, 22 perception questions, and a section to ascertain customers' assessment of the relative importance of the five dimensions. A 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) accompanies each statement. In addition, sections on customers' experience with and overall impression about the service and a section on demographics are included.

3.2.5   SERVQUAL Dimensions

The SERVQUAL statements including both the expectation questions and the perception questions are grouped in to the following five dimensions:

- *Tangibles* (statements 1 to 4): physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel.

- *Reliability* (statements 5 to 9): ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

- *Responsiveness* (statements 10 to 13): willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

- *Assurance* (statement 14 to 17): knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.

- *Empathy* (statements 18 to 22): caring, individual attention the firm provides to its customers.

In order to assess an organization's service quality using SERVQUAL, one must compute the difference the ratings customers assign to the paired expectation/perception statements. The formula would look like

SERVQUAL score = Perception score – Expectation score.

3.3 Definition of Rural Market

The concept "rural market" is a very broad one and it is interpreted in many ways. In the Indian context, the word 'rural' is so much associated with agriculture and farmers that rural marketing tends to be seen as a marketing of inputs or outputs related to agriculture. (Omkumar Krishnan and Barada Panigrahi, 2006)

3.3.1   Indian Rural Market

India lives in villages, close to 72 percent of Indian population lives in rural areas. In the country we have 6.36 lakh villages out of which only 13 percent have population above 2000. The rural economy contributes nearly half of the country's GDP (ETIG 2002-03) which is mainly agriculture driven and monsoon dependant. More than 50 percent of the sales FMCG and Durable companies come from the rural areas. The McKinsey report (2007) on the rise on consumer market in India predicts that in twenty years the rural Indian market will be larger than the total consumer markets in countries such as South Korea or Canada today, and almost four times the size of today's urban Indian market and estimated the size of the rural market at $577 Billion.

3.3.2   Defining the Rural Consumer

Defining the rural consumer from a rural marketer's perspective, Pradeep Lokhande, Founder-Director, Rural Relations, said, "There is no consensus among rural marketers to define rural India. It differs from company to company, sector to sector". In his opinion, a household whose 50 per cent of the income is generated from agriculture can come under the definition of being rural.

3.3.3   Impulse to go Rural

There are many reasons that have urged the local and International companies to enter into the uncharted territory of rural India. Some of the attractions are discussed below;

i.   *Large Population:*   The rural Indian population is large and its growth rate is also high. Over 70% India's one billion plus population lives in around 627,000 villages in rural areas. This simply shows the great potentiality of the rural India, which has to bring the much needed volumes.

ii. *Rising Rural Prosperity:* India is now seeing a dramatic shift towards prosperity in rural households. To drive home the potential of rural India just consider some of these impressive facts about the rural sector.

iii. *Growth in Market:* The purchasing power in rural India is on steady rise and it has resulted in the growth of the rural market. The market has been growing at 3-4% per annum adding more than one million new consumers every year.

iv. *Effectiveness of Communication:* A rural consumer is brand loyal and understands symbols better. The rural audience has matured enough to understand the communication developed for the urban markets. Television has been a major effective communication system for rural mass communication.

v.   *IT Penetration in Rural India:* Today there are over 15 million villagers in India who are aware of Internet and over 300,000 villagers have used it. Over the next two years, WorldTel is expected to provide 1000 centers in Tamil Nadu with 2 to 20 terminals in each centre. Today's rural children and youth will grow up in an environment where they have information access. As the electronic ethos and IT culture moves into rural India, the possibilities of change are becoming visible. (*Wireless intelligence Report*)

vi. *Impact of Globalization:* The impact of globalization will be felt in rural India as much as in urban. But it will be slow. It will have its impact on target groups like farmers, youth and women. Farmers, today 'keep in touch' with the latest information and maximize both ends.

3.3.4   Challenges in Indian Rural Market

According to a study conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), the major obstructions retailers face in penetrating the rural market can be attributed to inadequate infrastructure, low income levels and an entirely different lifestyle. Phenomenal improvements in the income

level, infrastructure, and the living standard of the rural folks have been observed in the last few years. However, retail companies should be adept at strategising innovative marketing plans to overcome the following glitches and challenges

- Absence of adequate physical communication facilities (like all weather roads) making many villages inaccessible (during monsoon)

- Power problems

- Huge base of daily wage earners

- Farmers whose livelihood depends on the vagaries of the monsoon (unstable income)

- Lack of proper mass media and other communication facilities(inaccessibility of conventional media)

- Underdeveloped and poor people, still stuck in their old world ways

- Completely unorganised and immature market

- Language barriers as rural India has hundreds of communities with their own local dialects

- Completely dispersed, scattered and heterogeneous market

- Low per capita income with millions of BPL families

- Illiterate and uneducated population slow to change, making promotions and advertisements ineffective

- Large scale availability of spurious products, generally the variants of the popular brands

- Seasonal demands of products and services

- Different lifestyles with ways of thinking that are poles apart.

3.3.5 Overcoming the Challenges of Indian Rural Market

To address the issue of the urban and rural gap and reaching to the rural masses can be addressed by falling back on the Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP) marketing strategies as advocated by Prahalad (2004) and the 4 A's Availability, Affordability, Acceptability and Awareness (Anderson and Biliou, 2007, Kashyap and Raut, 2005). The BOP marketing strategies basically talk about aggregating the demand of consumers who have low individual purchasing power and are spread out. The basic commercial infrastructure suggested by Prahalad and Hart (2002) for the bottom of the pyramid markets constitutes of four things, creating buying power, improving access, tailoring local solutions and shaping aspirations.

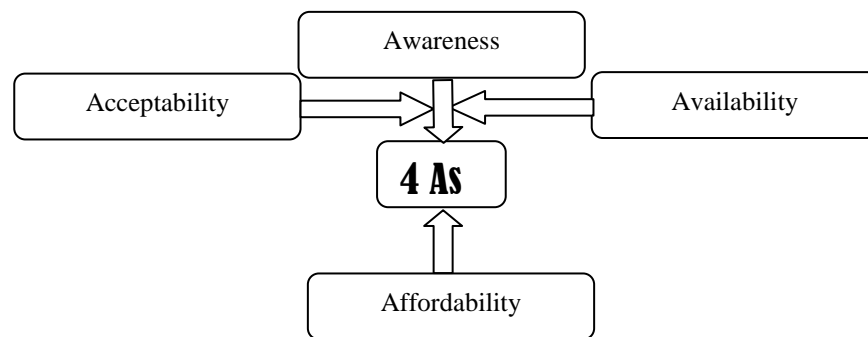The 4 As model described in Figure 1, is explained in the each of the As is detailed out below.

Figure 1: 4 AS Model

i. *Availability:* The companies are concentrating more to make them available of their product. The product reach to the consumers.

ii. *Acceptability:* the companies getting acceptance from the rural people about their product. Quality, features, function and price of the product will work to improve the willingness to consume.

iii. *Affordability:* The companies which offer their product to affordable price to the rural customer. Nokia are working on low cost handsets which could be of use in rural areas.

iv. *Awareness:* Awareness is linked to the issues of promotion in rural areas. The promotion of the services also needs to be adapted to the village environment; the language and means of communication used should be in the local language.

From the part one the researcher explains all the theoretical aspects related to service sectors, service quality, and rural market. The next part will focus the reviews related to the relevant service quality and rural market.

IV. REVIEW OF THE STUDY

Review of the study is classified in to two different areas. They are (a) Reviews related to service quality and (b) Reviews related to rural market.

4.1 Reviews related to Service Quality

Measuring service quality is an emerging area in recent days. Most of the researcher's academicians and Industries peoples are using SERVQUAL to measure the quality of services. SERVQUAL remains the most widely applied measure of service quality by academics and practitioners. Quality of Service is a difficult concept to quantify, however in the pursuit of strategies to improve the quality of service

and to achieve consumer satisfaction and loyalty to the measurement of service quality is essential (Lesley Douglas and Robert Connor, 2003). Service quality has lots of disputes in different ways. This chapter discusses the criticism and modification on service quality. Criticisms include the failure to draw on the various disciplines of psychology, social sciences and economics. For SERVQUAL no viable measurement techniques or approaches have been put forward as serious alternatives. Some of the researchers found the results in their studies prove the chances of modification in SERVQUAL.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) suggested that every researcher who attempts to use SERVQUAL has to adjust it for a specific research situation. Parasuraman et al. (1988) found that the 22 questions formed five dimensions. But some studies have found more than five dimensions, while other research has suggested fewer dimensions. Salvador Ferrer & Carmen Maria shows that the five dimensions of Parasuraman et al. (1988) may be reduced, and that their relevancy and composition would depend on the type of service. The results of their study reveal that the enlarged scale, with slight variations. The ESQS enables a more accurate analysis of university service quality and adapts better to university services. Gourdin (1988) categorized airline service quality in terms of three items: safety, timeliness and price.

Moackay (1989) considered that the SERVQUAL dimensions should change with different types of service. Knutson et al. (1990) developed an instrument called LODGSERV and found the same dimensions of SERVQUAL: reliability, assurance, responsiveness, tangibles, and empathy in a descending order of importance. Finn and Lamb (1991) pointed out that the theoretical constructs had to be studied on an industry basis to determine if the label "generic" is warranted. Saleh and Ryan (1992) reported five dimensions of "conviviality", "tangibles", "reassurance", "avoid sarcasm" and "empathy", with "empathy" being the most important dimension of service quality. Scott and Shieff (1993) contended that the five dimensions are only applicable to homogeneous service. Elliott and Roach (1993) proposed food and beverage, timely luggage transport, seat comfort, the check in process, and in-flight service dimensions.

Getty and Thompson (1994) adapted SERVQUAL to develop the LODGQUAL instrument with three dimensions of tangibles, reliability, and contact. Getty and Thompson (1994) developed the LODGQUAL, which was adapted from SERVQUAL, and used it to measure service quality in the lodging industry. However, they identified three basic dimensions. The tangibles and reliability dimensions are defined as the SERVQUAL defined. The third dimension, contact, was a composite of SERVQUAL'S responsiveness, empathy and assurance. Their findings suggested that these three dimensions in their study are "indistinguishable" and represent the customer's contact experience with the employees. Haynes (1994) used the processing of luggage, seat cleanliness, and the check-in process, the convenience of transit, timeliness, and handling of customer complaints as the standards of service quality.

Knutson et al. (1995) proposed an instrument called DINESERV to assess customers' perceptions of a restaurant's quality. David Lynch proposed that new 17-item instrument called as ATTRACTQUAL scale it contains two dimensions like interactions and outcomes underlie attraction visitors' perceptions of service quality. Knutsons et al (1995) proposed an instrument called DINESERV to assess customers' perceptions of a restaurant's service quality. DINESERV was adapted and refined from SERVQUAL and LODGSERV (a measuring scale for service quality in lodging properties) containing 29 statements on a 7-point response scale. It was used to undertake periodical surveys and to determine changes in perceptions as the results of changes in normative expectations and of service quality delivered. The DINESERV instrument has been extensively used in measuring service quality in the restaurant business including the airport food service.

Asubonteng et al.（1996）found that the SERVQUAL model's applicability cannot meet all service industries or situations and the lack of validity of the model especially in respect of the dependence or independence of the five main variables. Buttle, F. (1996) pounced that SERVQUAL's five dimensions are not universal. The number of dimensions comprising Service Quality is contextualized. The items do not always load on to the factors which one would a priori expect. There is a high degree of inter correlation between the five RATER dimensions.

Williams (1997) pounced that customers not only find this tedious but the respondents also get embarrassed a frequently choosing the number 7 when judging an excellent facility. Also, the questionnaire takes a considerable time to fill in. Paul Lawrence Miner (1998) illustrates that criticisms of the SERVQUAL instrument may be valid for the travel industry. There is an indication that the dimensions identified by Parasuraman et al. are not supported. It would be possible to improve the accuracy of the SERVQUAL instrument for continued use in future research by paying attention to some of the academic criticisms. Malcolm Wright (1998) indicated that SERVQUAL scale is that the dimensions and components vary markedly from situation to situation. This may be because they are highly situation specific, or it may be because the procedure is not reliable. Ka-Shing Wooa (1998) his paper reports the results of a study to identify service quality determinants based on the students' perceptions. The results of an exploratory factor analysis of 25 items and a regression analysis produce five dimensions in the following priority: (1) learning facilities, (2) quality of course materials, (3) studying atmosphere, (4) capability of tutors, and (5) center arrangement for tutorials.

Mei, Dean, & White (1999) studied service quality in the hotel industry in Australia, using SERVQUAL, and developed the HOLSERV scale. The results showed that "employees", "tangibles", and "reliability" were the three predictive dimensions of service quality, with "employees" as the best predictor. Sirra et al., (1999) designed a similar questionnaire of HOTELQUAL to examine customers' perceptions of hotels and delineated three factors of "hotel facilities", "appraisal of the staff", and "functioning and organization of service".

Carman, J. et al., indicate that the modification of the SERVPERF instrument in a specific setting in different cultures is necessary. The significance of recoverability in this study supports our primary modification of the SERVPERF instrument in the fast food industry. Assurance and empathy were removed according to the results of exploratory factor analysis in this study. Robert T. Y. Wu, exemplify that the service quality differs from industry to industry as well as varies among the different sectors within a certain industry, the characteristics and offered services.

Frochot and Hughes (2000) studied historic house visitors and they identified five differing service quality dimensions which constituted their HISTOQUAL scale: responsiveness, tangibles, communications, consumables and empathy.Zeithaml et al (2000) study identified dozens of Web site features at the perceptual attribute level and categorized them into 11 e-SQ dimensions: Reliability, Responsiveness, Access, Flexibility, Ease of navigation, Efficiency, Assurance/trust, Security/privacy, Price knowledge, Site aesthetics and Customization/personalization. The collection of Web site attributes pertaining to these 11 dimensions served as the e-SQ domain from which we drew items for the e-SQ scale. Loiacono et al (2000) created the WebQual, a scale for rating Web sites on 12 dimensions: informational fit to task, interaction, trust, response time, design, intuitiveness, visual appeal, innovativeness, flow-emotional appeal, integrated communication, business processes, and substitutability. G Shainesh and Mukul Mathur (2000) develop a comprehensive instrument, RAILQUAL, that can be used by the railways for collecting feedback from customers. This would help them to monitor, control, and improve their service and competitiveness. RAILQUAL has 50-item of statement with following dimensions: Ability to Provide Safe and Fast Delivery, Cost of Transportation, Encouraging Flexibility and Bilateralism, Attitude of Staff and Officers, Convenient Wagon, Allotment Procedure, Terminal facilities providing and sharing Information.

Educational Service Quality (ESQ) an educational service quality instrument from Holdford and Reinders(2001) The original 41 items in the ESQ instrument consisted of items that assessed student perceptions about learning resources in the college, faculty, school administration (ie, deans, department chairs, and office personnel), and perceptions of their educational progress. Four items from the original instrument relating to perceptions of educational progress. Yoo and Donthu (2001) developed a nine-item SITEQUAL scale for measuring site quality on four dimensions: ease of use, aesthetic design, processing speed, and security.

Barnes and Vidgen's (2002) WebQual scale, data for developing and testing SITEQUAL were gathered from convenience samples. Like WebQual, SITEQUAL does not capture all aspects of the purchasing process and therefore does not constitute a comprehensive assessment of a site's service quality. Barnes and Vidgen (2002) developed a completely different scale to measure an organization's e-commerce offering, which they also call WebQual. This scale provides an index of a site's quality (customer perceptions weighted by importance) and has five factors: usability,

design, information, trust, and empathy. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra (2002) detailed five broad sets of criteria as relevant to e-SQ perceptions: (a) information availability and content (b) ease of use or usability, (c) privacy/security, (d) graphic style, and (e) reliability/fulfillment.

Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) goal of creating a scale to measure customer perceptions of e-tailing quality is excellent, and their three study approach is comprehensive. They used online and offline focus groups, a sorting task, and an online-customer-panel survey to develop a 14-item scale called eTailQ. The scale contains four factors: Web site design, reliability/fulfillment, privacy/security, and customer service. J. Gail et al., (2003) their study entitled "LibQUAL+^{TM} and the Professional Military Library" pointed out the Six of these special libraries participated in the Spring 2003 LibQUAL+^{TM} survey, sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries and Texas A&M University. LibQUAL+^{TM}enables similar libraries to "solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality." Ekinci et al. (2003) found that tangible and intangible dimensions are the only two distinct dimensions measuring service quality of hotels. David Holdford, (2003) study identified 5 dimensions of service quality of Pharmaceutical Education. The dimensions are labeled resources, interpersonal behavior of faculty, faculty expertise, faculty communication, and administration.

A. Parasuraman, et al., (2005) their research stated that E-S-QUAL scale developed in the research is a 22-item scale of four dimensions: efficiency, fulfillment, system availability, and privacy. The second scale, E-RecS-QUAL, is salient only to customers who had non routine encounters with the sites and contains 11 items in three dimensions: responsiveness, compensation, and contact.

Akbaba (2006) investigated the service quality expectations of business hotel's customers and identified five service quality dimensions, namely tangibles, adequacy in service quality, understanding and caring, assurance, and convenience.

Xie G. Z., et al.(2007) study uses the rural tourist motivation scale to measure the motivations, expectations, and satisfaction of nearly 200 rural tourists in five areas of Hainan, China by importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and factor analysis. They took the factors such as Environmental, Facilities, Activities, Psychological Experience. Eboli and Mazzulla (2007) measured customer satisfaction in the context of bus service on various factors including availability of shelter and benches at bus stops, cleanliness, overcrowding, information system, safety, personnel security, helpfulness of personnel, and physical condition of bus stops.

Sandra A. LeVasseur, Sally Green and Paul Talman paper examines the applicability and construct validity of the Schedule for the Evaluation of Individual Quality of Life-Direct Weight (SEIQoL-DW) for measuring quality of life in stroke survivors living at home that attend a secondary prevention clinic.

These criticisms led hospitality researchers to propose models with more specific quality scales for the lodging Industry. One is referred to as LODGQUAL designed for hotels and another one is called DINESERV, which was proposed for the assessment of restaurant service quality. The superiority of LODGQUAL of even DINESERV (Dinning service quality) over SERVQUAL has been much debated in hospitality circles.

For this reason, the highly debatable LODGQUAL (Lodging service quality) model will be ignored and the highly acclaimed SERVQUAL model will be used in the judgments and assessment of service quality arguments, which may be raised

4.2 Reviews related to Rural Market

In this part the researcher points out the reason for focusing rural market, opportunities of rural market, and discrepancies of the rural and urban people.

According to various studies, around 12.2 per cent of the world's population lives in rural India, which also indicates that 29 per cent of the world's rural population lives here. As per the 2001 census, 72.2 per cent of the population lives in about 6, 38,000 villages scattered throughout the country. The numbers of people living in each of the Indian villages also vary considerably. It is found that most of the Indian villages have a population of less than 1,000, while there are only a few villages where more than 10,000 people live. Rural India has more volume of disposal of income and it has lots of marketing scope in FMCG, durables and nondurable products and tangibles and intangibles products from Indian and International companies.

Block & Bert (1976) found the results from their studies is there were significant differences do exist regarding media exposure patterns of these urban and rural poor. The urban poor are heavier viewers of TV, while the rural poor are heavier radio listeners. Magazines are read more by the rural poor, while newspapers are read more by the urban poor. There are heavy readers among the urban poor, but a large portion of both groups do little reading. There are also differences in the type of broadcast programming and print material preferred by each group.

Dehter (1987) spots out that the quality of life depends on the availability of shopping facilities in addition to education, healthcare, cultural amenities, and recreational opportunities.

Lutz. F. et al, (1992) shows that rural teachers are more likely than urban teachers to be linked to their schools communities through kinship and history. Broomhall (1992) and DeYoung (1993) indicated the same results, they point out that rural communities are less likely than urban communities to value education. Sun et al, (1994) indicated that rural parents more likely than urban parents to be involved in their schools.

Christine E. et al, (1997) designated that rural and urban people differences in substances consumption. In 1976 urban students had greater prevalence for most substances. But in 1992, rural and urban students were similar, with rural students having higher prevalence for alcohol and cigarette use.

In an interview, D Shivakumar, he pointed out that the drivers are the same, differing only in order. In urban markets, aspiration is key — it is all about brands, lifestyles and show-of value. This is followed by quality and finally price. Rural India is driven primarily by price, followed by aspiration and then quality.

According to Census 2001, all India literacy rate is 64.8% of which the literacy rate among urban population is 79.9% whereas for the rural population it is 58.7%. The demand for financial products mainly depends upon the investor awareness which further depends upon the literacy levels of the rural investors.

According to NCAER report (2002), stated that rural literacy levels have improved from 36 percent to 59 percent, the number of below poverty houses have declined from close to half to 46 percent and the number of pucca houses have doubled from 22 percent to 41 percent.

Levi (2003) point out that the perceptions of the rural consumers are different from the urban and semi-urban societies. The market share of the regional brands is decreasing and national brand market share are on increasing trend. The corporate social responsibility of a business firm is a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources.

S.Gopalakrishnan Iyer, (2006) declared that the rural markets has viewed the markets as a homogeneous one, but in practice, there are significant buyers and user differences across regions as well as within that require a differential treatment of the marketing problems. Rural marketing in India is not much developed. There are many hindrances in the area of market, product design and positioning, pricing, distribution and promotion. Companies need to understand rural marketing in a broader manner not only to survive and grow in their business, but also a means to the development of the rural economy.

Emerging Market Report: Health in India, (2007) acknowledged that an estimated 27.5% of Indians were living below the national poverty line. Some 300 million people in India live on less than a dollar a day, and more than 50% of all children are skinny. Indian and multinational companies have been attracted by the potential that the rural market holds, and the strategies adopted by them are worth studying and analyzing to unearth learning issues.

The McKinsey report (2007) on the rise on consumer market in India predicts that in twenty years the rural Indian market will be larger than the total consumer markets in countries such as South Korea or Canada today, and almost four times the size of today's urban Indian market and estimated the size of the rural market at $577 Billion. There is lots of scope in rural market.

Anand & Hundal, B.S. (2007) examined the comparative buying behavior of rural and their urban counterparts towards the purchase of refrigerator. The factors considered are

necessity, symbol of social status, advertising influence, brand reputation and time saving device.

Chirag V. Erda (2008) designated that there is significant difference of quality, functions and brand consciousness for purchase of mobile phone between rural and urban consumers. The rural consumers are less quality, functions and brand conscious compared to urban consumers.

The review researcher tries to provide evidences of difference between rural and urban people. The following evidence from some of the researchers shows that the dissimilarity of rural and urban consumer. Literacy rates in rural areas are comparatively lower than urban areas. (Deutsche Bank AG).

AM Davis et al., (2008) designated that children in rural and urban areas consumed equivalent calories per day and calories from fat, but rural children ate more junk food and urban children were more likely to skip breakfast. Urban children engaged in more metabolic equivalent tasks and had slightly higher total sedentary activity than rural children. The BMI percentile was equivalent across rural and urban children but rural children were more often overweight and urban children were more often at risk for overweight. Some variables were equivalent across urban and rural children. The results indicate some key health behavior differences between groups.

Meena and A.S. Dahiya (2009) spring that ease of carriage, package weight, simplicity, transparency and similarity of packaging have comparatively less impact on purchase decisions of rural consumers than urban ones. Regarding the checking of ISI mark, WOOLMARK and AGMARK a very similar pattern has been observed in rural areas. This shows that the buying decisions of urban and rural consumers are different.

S.S.Santhakumari and Kannan (2010) points out that Rural and urban customers are differing on the following factors. They differ in their Personality, education, behavior, perception, buying pattern, lifestyle, belief, attitude, occupation, income.
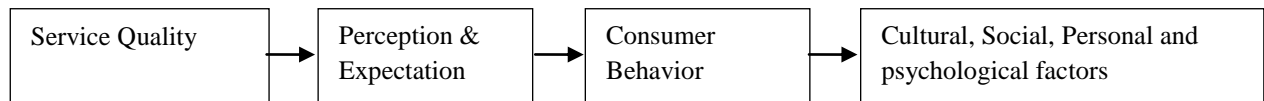
This is the way which helps to measure the Perception and expectation of the consumers. Through consumer behavioral factors we will know about the Perception and Expectation of consumer. There are huge dissimilarities in the Rural and urban consumer behavior. The Consumer Behavior factors are dissimilarities among rural and urban consumers. So, their Perceptions and expectations are differing.
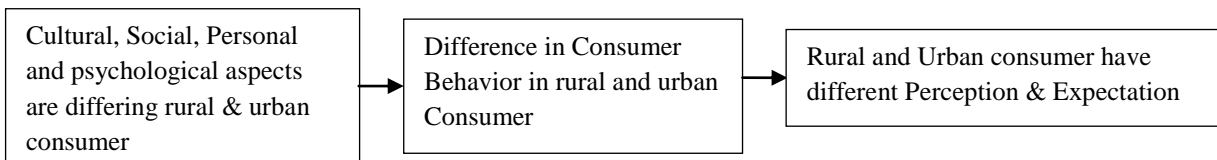
The perceptions and expectations are the important factors in measuring the service quality. These differences are conformed that separate SERVQUAL measuring scale is needed for rural or urban market.

D Shivakumar said in a press meet that in urban markets aspiration is the key — it is all about brands, lifestyles and show-of value. This is followed by quality and finally price. Rural India is driven primarily by price, followed by aspiration and then quality.

Deutsche Bank AG report says that insurance companies are offering small premium term insurance products to the rural sector to increase sale of insurance policies in rural areas. Literacy rates in rural areas are comparatively lower than urban areas.

This review helps to know the difference between rural and urban customers. Rural peoples are differing in demographic factors like income, literacy level, culture and experiences. These demographic factors are determined by the expectation and perception of the people. So, the rural and urban peoples are having different perception and expectation level. SERVQUAL measuring scale designed based on the urban population. There is a change to design the separate measuring scale for rural customers.

V. GREY AREA OF THE STUDY

Review of literature indicates the opportunities of rural market, rural customer and criticisms of SERVQUAL and different measuring scale to measure the service quality. The researcher points out some of the grey area and potential contribution of the study. They are

* Most of the researchers modify the SERVQUAL scale for their convenience to measure the quality of services on the respective service industry. The revisions are made by add and remove the dimensions of service quality. Addition and removal of the dimension is based on the nature of the service sectors and nature of the customers and their experience. The

customers' experiences are combination of their perception and expectation.

- Many of the researchers made the changes in SERVQUAL scale based on the urban customers. They took urban cities for their studies. Based on urban customers experience the researchers changed the service quality dimensions. Their studies mainly focus the services in urban areas. Their major study areas are hospitals, hotels & Restaurant, railway, Library, education, and internet expect rural tourisms.

- Perception and expectation both are behavioral factors. Perception and expectation are differing on every individual. Need, wants and desire plays a major role in purchase decision. Need, wants and desire also differ based on the behavior of the individual. Consumer behavior influencing by the following factors.

  i.   Cultural: Culture, Subculture and Social class.

  ii. Social: Reference groups, Family, Roles and Status.

  iii. Personal: Age and lifecycle stage, Occupation, Economic situation, Lifestyle, personality and Self concept and,

  iv. Psychological: Motivation, perception, learning beliefs and attitudes

- Number of evidence available to prove the rural and urban consumers behavior differences. Rural consumers are differing urban consumers on above listed factors. Most of the researchers contacted studies related to measure the similarity and differences between rural and urban customers. The evidence of differences is list out in the second part of the literature.

- From the review the researchers indicate that there is a behavioral difference between rural and urban customers based on their demographic factors. This behavior difference illustrates the rural and urban customers have different perception and expectation.

- Another point of view is that over all urban migration in Tamil Nadu was 4.44% as per 2001 censes. In 1991, 39 million people migrated in rural-urban patterns of which 54% were female in India. The world the urban migration is growing. Lots of rural peoples are migrating to urban areas. Rural peoples have believed on urban areas to earn more, live with modern life style, educational facilities, and increasing literature rates in rural areas and monsoon failure.

- The migrated rural people have same perception and expectation. Statistics of Indian government reveal that even with the increasing urbanization and migration, 63% of India's population would still be living in rural areas in 2025.

VI.   POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This chapter shows the potential contribution of this research work. The research will focus the rural market and services in rural areas. Lots of the researchers including Parasuraman made different measuring scale for different service sectors. Why we cannot frame separate measuring scale for rural market? Rural market has never ending growth and opportunities not only in physical product and also in services sectors.

- The researcher will find out the suitable dimensions of service quality for rural market. Generally the service quality dimensions are designed based on the characteristics of the services. But this study will try to frame the service quality dimensions based on the customer point of view especially for rural customers. The reason is the success of the every business in customer hand.

- The addition of new dimensions will focus the behavior of the rural people. From the behavior the researcher tries to frame the dimensions of the service quality. Normally most of the researchers are framing the service quality dimensions, and then they measure the Perception and expectation of the customers. But this study determines the dimensions based on the customer perception and expectation.

- The researcher will measure the perception and expectation of the rural customer through their needs and wants in selected services. SERVPERP will help to measure the perception of the services available in rural areas. Measuring the perception is never determining the standard quality of the services. It is end process to know the customer satisfactions. But measuring the expectation will help to form the better services and determine the standards of the quality to the service product.

- This research work will take the four or five service sectors like hospitals, bank, telecommunication, postal and insurance. And to study the rural customer expectation on these services. With the help of their expectation the researcher frames the dimensions of the service quality.

VII.   CONCLUSION

SERVQUAL is a fundamental tool to measure the quality of the services. "Change never changes" like that tons of researchers amend the SERVQUAL as per their study areas and location. Service Industries grow very fast. New services are emerging year by year. That is the necessary part to regularize these services. So, the researchers made some modification of the SERVQUAL and proposed the new measuring scale like DINNSERV, LibQUAL+, LODGQUAL, e-SQ, RAILQUAL and HISTOQUAL. These researches also propose the new quality measuring scale to the rural market. This measuring scale will help to measure the quality of services in rural areas. Present days a bunch of National and International companies are ready to enter into the Indian rural market. Some of the companies are already entered and operated their services in rural India.   This research proposal

highlights the theoretical foundation of the Services marketing, Rural marketing and Service quality. This proposal reviews a plenty of studies related to the study areas and finds out the suitable factors to precede for further research work.

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