

MEDIA INFLUENCE AND MENTAL MIGRATION

HASMAH ZANUDDIN & YAP LI KUAN

ABSTRACT

This article examined the conceptual construct of media influence in migration decision-making. The term “mental migration” is used to refer to the intentions-behaviour relationship in migration decision-making (Gordon 1994). Migration denoted as any movement by humans from one locality to another, often over long distances in large groups. Pojman (1999), stressed that perception is the first faculty of the mind exercised about ideas; it is the first and simplest that reflection, and is by some called thinking in general. Consequently, perception influences our decision-making and action to be taken everyday. The rationale of influence can be said as media is built from our culture, and our perception as an integral and structural part of the rationalist. There is a positive use of media in framing the relationship in migration (Merican 2005). Individual undergoes mass communication process in gaining information and knowledge through mass media. Therefore, the understanding of communication process is essential in determining the way of media in influencing decision-making. The conceptual construct of media influence and mental migration in this article is discussed with considerations of political, economic, social and cultural factors.

Keywords: *media influence, mental migration, media role, message, culture, decision-making*

MEDIA INFLUENCE AND MENTAL MIGRATION

Due to the expansion of trade, economic, political, and social changes, migration has increased rapidly since the fifteenth century. Indeed, the great evolution of migration has occurred as a complex issue nowadays in all countries around the world. According to International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (Appleyard 1991), ‘international migration has been changing considerably in character during the last five to ten years, especially the increasing convergence of refugee and economically

motivated migration'. Mental migration roles as a persuasive aspect to influence and persuade migrants particularly in determine decision to migrate. It is providing a different window of understanding in migrating. In terms of identifying mental motivation in migrating, a high level of understanding about mental migration must be achieved. On the other hand, the understanding of mental migration is also essential to determine its importance and impacts in migrating. Firstly, the term "mental migration" will be defined in this essay. Secondly, it will then outline the formation of mental migration which includes the process of picking up information, and forming perception. Thirdly, the importance of mental migration which is the first step in migrating will be drawn. It might cover mental migration can be used to determine the decision to migrate, and persuade migrant to take action. Last but not least, the impacts of mental migration in term of social, political, economic benefits, media, cultural, and discrimination will also be discussed later. In other words, reasons in motivating migration will be gained as well.

The term "mental migration" is used to refer to the intentions-behaviour relationship in migration decision-making (Gordon 1994). Migration denoted as any movement by humans from one locality to another, often over long distances in large groups. While Agozino (2000: 26) stated that, 'migration is the action taken by migrants as they move from one geographic point to another geographic point'. In generally, migration can be involved in many forms like temporary and permanent, voluntary and involuntary, local and distant, national and international. According to Guthrie (2003), voluntary migrations refer to people have come and gone of their own free will. But, forced migrations have not been unknown in history, as when a conquering people has expelled, killed, or sold the conquered into slavery. However, migrations phenomenon in today's society has been shifted to voluntary conditions. The thought of moving from one location to another is initially formed by individual's perception and behaviour. It is essential to understand the ways of forming perception, migration intention and behaviour which is so-called mental migration.

In our daily life, insight, intuition or knowledge gained by perceiving. The process of perceiving formed perception which is to interpret a message to be locked into one's mind whether in a short or long term basis. According to Pojman (1999), perception is the first faculty of the mind exercised about ideas; it is the first and simplest idea that from reflection, and is by some called thinking in general. Consequently, perception influences our decision-making and action to be taken everyday. For instance, McDonalds, worldwide famous and leading fast food restaurant always concern about consumer's health and continues provide quality food to consumer. It can be proved with the media release on September 9, 2004, McDonalds (2004) introduces the new canola oil that contains no cholesterol, it protects consumers' health and life. By labelling the nutrition information on McDonald's regular menu food packaging, it protects consumers by given the facts needed to help them to make informed food choices. With its effort of concerning consumer interests for the obesity in Australia, consumers would appreciate and have different perceptions towards McDonalds. Therefore, McDonalds has formed good perception, reputation and brand loyalty in consumer mind. Based on the example given above, that is well explained that perception is extremely essential in affecting one's mind in decision-making.

According to Erikson (1988: 25), 'it is important to realize that all knowledge begins with sensory experience. The role of senses, then, is to inform the mind.' The statement is true and it does the same in forming perception. As in common, human has five senses which are sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Common sense helps to perceive the real world directly. In fact, scientists was categorized this concept as direct realism model which explain that the physical world exists independently of human's awareness and the things that people perceive are equivalent to the way people perceive them (Pojman 1999). However, direct realism tends to insist that the physical objects human perceive are not what they seem to be and even in the past. For instance, light from the sun takes time to reach our eyes; therefore what has been seen already existed in the past.

On the other hand, 'representationalism model argues that the immediate object of perception is a sense datum or sense impression which cannot exist apart from our awareness of it' (Pojman 1999: 75). Sense datum, sense impression or percept, are formed through perceptual experience in daily life. Burns (1992: 40) stated that 'percept are based on a highly selective set of operations that are applied to the images presented to our eyes by the physical world.' In other words, perceptions caused by representing the physical world through sense data, mental entities privately from individual perceivers. The elucidation of the notion of perceiving a material object will include the material object perceived in the causal of the perception or of the sense-impression or sense-datum involved in the perception (Gruyter 1983). Based on Locke's causal theory of perception, 'processes in the external world impinge on the perceiver's sense organs, which in turn send messages to the brain, where they are transformed into mental events' (cited in Pojman 1999: 76).

Obviously, statements that mentioned above are well emphasized that what has been seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled will be turned into a message and send to the brain in order to transform into mental event then formed perceptual experience. By forming perceptual experience, individual tends to have better idea towards what passes in each mind though reflection. According to Burns (1992: 150) 'human's brain structure is directly picked up information from the stimulus'. In order words, structure is selected from the stimulus or teased out meaningful information from the structure to build organized perceptions. Therefore, all our knowledge obtains ultimately from sense experience.

Next, the formation of attitude and perception will be identified in depth at this section. According to Gregory (2000), individual's attitude and perception are formed based on the first-hand knowledge, second-hand knowledge, media and other formal communication, conditioning, commonly held belief and facts.

Among all kinds of influences, first-hand knowledge is a very powerful attitude former. For instance, the excellences of products and services, after-sales service help to create favourable attitude towards the organisation (Gregory 2000). However, second-hand knowledge which gained from families, friends, trusted colleagues are also important in affecting individual's attitude and decision making process. On the other hand, the media is a potent influence especially if a topic is one of heightened public interest.

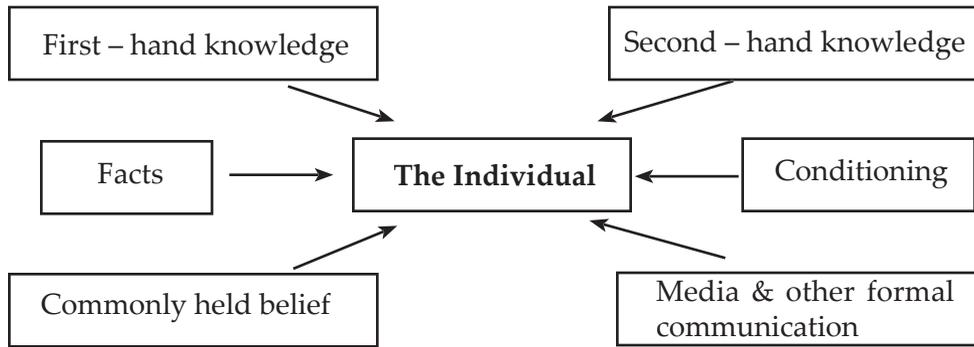


Figure 1: Individual’s attitude and perception - Adapted from Gregory (2000)

Gregory (2000) stated that, conditioning influences the way individuals look at everything individuals come into contact with. Therefore, each individual has own personalities, thinking, and attitudes due to different background, educational, religious beliefs, political views, age, sex and social position. Besides that, attitudes and perceptions are also formed by facts because men nowadays are educated and knowledgeable. As a result, attitudes and perceptions are formed via a combination of all mentioned factors above. Obviously, the clear understanding about the development of perception, process of perceiving, and formation of attitude have been well defined until this stage.

Mental migration is affected by numerous internal and external aspects. The decision-making process resulting in migration or remaining at the place of origin may be affected by the following factors: the environment surrounding the potential migrant, actual situation in political, economic, or social, terms; especially the potential migrant’s perception and assessment of the actual situation (Agozino 2000). In order words, aspects that listed above play a crucial role in forming one’s perception and attitude in making decision to migrate.

MEDIA INFLUENCE: MEDIA COMMUNICATION AND INFLUENCING PROCESS

Media is classified into various groups in which it helps communicating and networking humans around the world. In this modern capitalist society, the three major mass media such as television, radio and newspapers plays a big part in people daily life. With the invention of the television in the 15th century, people rely on television for information, entertainment and relaxation. Until today, every household has at least one television. Naturally, mass media works as a communication tool everyday. Apart from communicating to public, media has been used widely in influencing and forming public opinion.

Based on (Media_influence 2006), media influence refers to the way in which the mass media in all their forms (television, film, advertising and similar forms) affect the way we, as an audience, behave and act in our everyday lives. Therefore, documentary, movies, sitcoms, press, books, and advertisements can be considered as part of one’s adaptation to daily life’s perception. Revealed from Thompson (2006), there has been an increasing interest in the power of the media to affect public

opinion and government policy over the last few years. Issues such as immigration and multiculturalism are being discussed and criticized through the media to the audiences. According to Merican (2005: 92), 'media is built from our culture, and our perception as an integral and structuring part of the rationalist'. There is a positive use of media in framing the relationship in migration.

In fact, individual undergoes mass communication process in gaining information and knowledge through mass media. Therefore, the understanding of communication process is essential in determining the way of media in influencing decision-making. Based on Lasswell (1948, cited in Hanclosky), mass communication process requires an individual to create a message that is sent through a channel to a receiver and that results in some responses. According to the communication model - Shannon- Schramm Model (Figure 2) which designed by Wilbur Schramm in 1954 was well-described the emphasis from the medium to the individual.

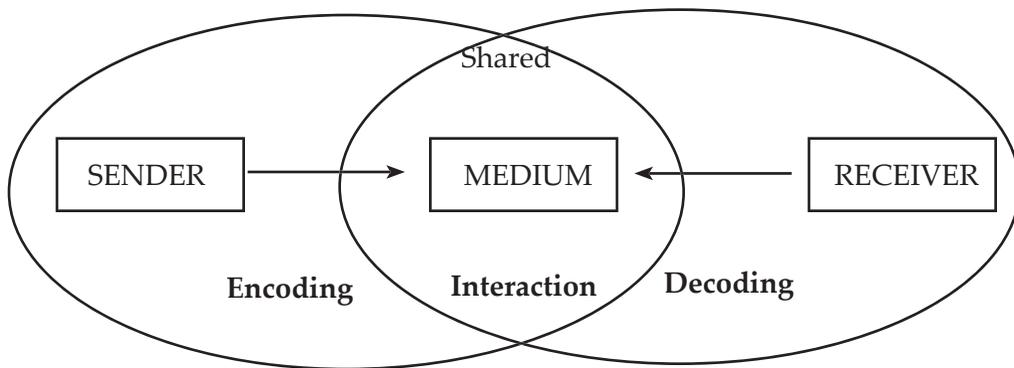


Figure 2: Shannon-Schramm model of communication

In further, each individual grows up with a unique collection of beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and experiences. Thus, individual sends and receives information based upon a unique field of experience (Hanclosky 1995). As two people converse, each is expressing knowledge of what he/she already knows. Then, their respective field of experience is growing into one another when one person offering new ideas to the others. As a result of continued communication, the structure of individual's attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs will be altered. In further, the effect of media influence could be defined from the Stair-Step Model of Communication Effects which developed by Lavidge and Steiner in 1961 (Hanclosky 1995).

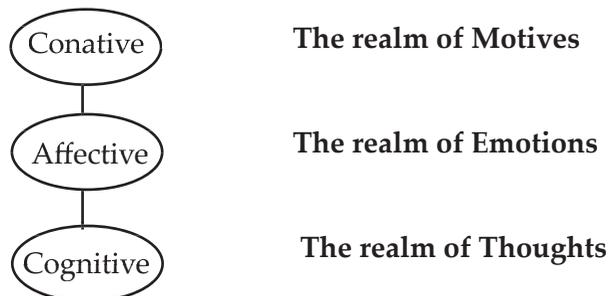


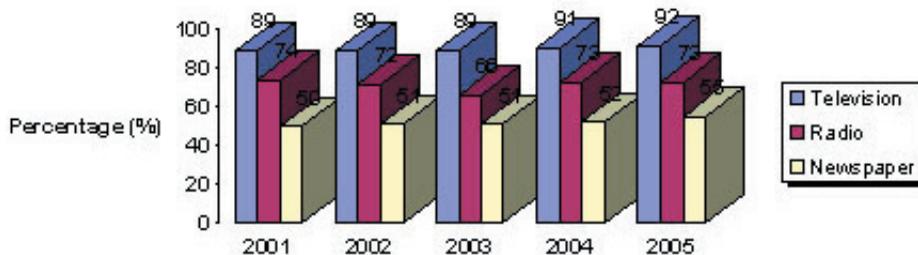
Figure 3: Stair-step model of communication effects

The cognitive dimension deals with the realm of thoughts and knowledge. Messages provide information and facts, which awake public awareness in certain issues or products. Then, messages change audience attitudes and feelings naturally in the affective dimensions and stimulate desired actions in conative dimension (Hanclosky 1995). Indeed, the development of human intention and decision to migrate are undergoes the similar process which listed above. Obviously, issues and information that portrayed on the media attracts and motivates audience in shaping perceptions and ideas particularly in migrating.

Taking an example for instance, Malaysia imports films from the United States, in which it contains strong American cultural backgrounds. These cultural backgrounds may influence viewers and locks up strong perception in one’s mind as the period lengthens. Younger generation in the society may perceive that American cultural backgrounds are more freedom in deeds and speeches. As the positive perception grows stronger, it will lead to behavioural change towards the issue. Taking another example for instance, press often advertises migration attractive benefits, and promotes the ideal living nature in their respectful country. Naturally, one may perceive that in order to gain a better life, one has to migrate. Therefore it is obvious that media plays a very important role in forming mental migration. As one’s mental migration lengthens through a period of time, it will definitely lead to behavioural change subsequently. As a key source of information, it cannot deny that media helps to form perceptions and influence individual in decision-making process.

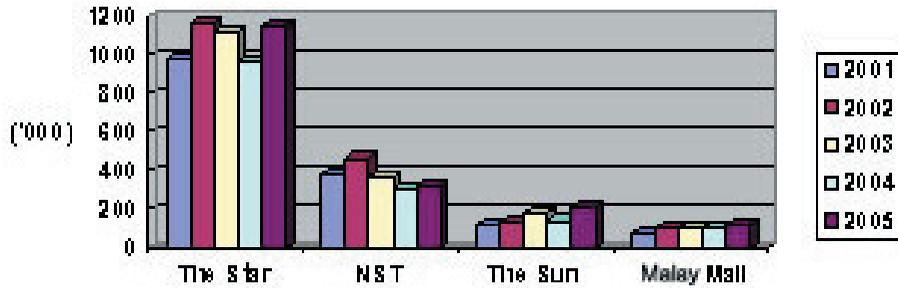
On the other hand, the media research survey was conducted by AC Nielson which drawn from *Media Guide 2006* was well-proven that the top mass medium and frequency of each medium in Malaysia. Therefore, a better understanding and idea of media influences could be defined directly from the chart below.

Media Reach Trend (2001-2005)

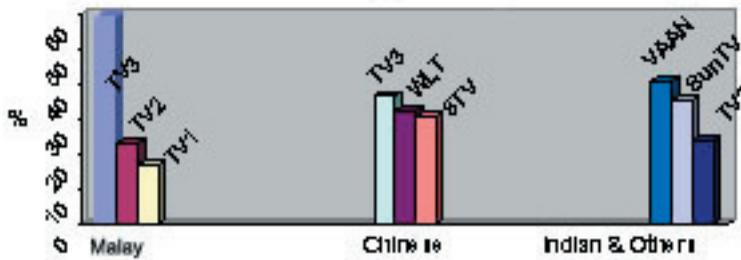


Obviously, the chart is well-supported the statement stated by Thompson (2005) that, television is a primary source of information and is the most influential medium in forming public opinion.

Readership of English newspaper



Malaysia top 3 TV channel (April-August 2005)



MEDIA & MIGRATION

In real life, the debate about the immigration and ethnic minorities has been more prominent in some countries. According to Thompson (2005), the impact of the media on the debate current policies is a greater concern amongst some academics, and less amongst others.

Based on the media survey revealed on September 2005 (Thompson 2005), the media's reporting on migration issues appears to have stirred little debate in Finland. However, media influencing not only the immigration debate, but also societal behavioural appears to be of central significance in Portugal. Obviously, there is a great contrast between both case studies where the migration is not as significant in Finland as they are in Portugal. Taking the past United Kingdom election for example, immigration was one of the key issues of the campaign, and media coverage was a key political concern.

Media are criticized for selectively reporting matters and playing on public prejudices so as to be misleading. Hanclosky (1995: 22) argued that 'mass media communication like news, and films is only part of the total communication process needed for individuals to develop an opinion in system analysis approach'. The reason is new editors and film directors are applying agenda setting process which capable in controlling the information in influencing attitudes through mass media to audiences. In addition, audience tends to respond to selective information in real life.

According to the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Hanclosky 1995:22), 'individuals expose themselves to information that is congruent with their beliefs

and actions. Contradictory information which may be cognitively dissonant is ignored'. In fact, an individual has ability to choose sources of information that are consistent with one's belief structure. For instance, a particular radio station, newspaper, and so on. However, he or she also has the ability to glean information which congruent with his/ her belief structure. As a result, issues and advertisements on the media would not influence an individual in decision-making process. In other words, media influence is either significant at this stage.

According to Thompson (2005) media plays an essential role in democracy by disseminating information and holding key players to account. As revealed from the article on 5th December 2005, the media is not just a source of information but also functions as a very important platform for the discussion of crucial social issues. Journalists claims to have too much power in choosing the information that wish to disseminate (Thompson 2005). It is important to note that journalists are responsible on sources for information which is critical in shaping public opinion. Accordingly, the sources of information are dependent not only on wider public (consumers), but also politicians and policy makers.

The fairness and accuracy on the discussion should be promoted in order for successful integration. According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ 2006), 'journalists need to be aware of the potential impact of their words and images given the deeply-rooted fears and apprehension of civil strife and social exclusion that exist within society'. The accuracy of current issues and arguments gave right understanding to the readers from local to foreign issues such as economic status, social level and political relations. As we know, these aspects are the important aspects that migrants concerned. However, the influences of advertisements also greatly influenced ones perception in decision-making process. According to the Elaborated Likelihood Model, a basic dimension of information processing and attitude change is the depth or amount of information processing (Aaker, Batra & Myers cited in Kendall 1996). Advertisements such as advantages of migrating to Australia and migration aids could be found on the press. Accordingly, repetition of messages would help in forming perception.

Social Aspect

Moving into the social aspect, it is actually quite similar as the media aspect mentioned above. Mental migration is formed by the social aspect through strong media influence. Other than that, social standing in the society also plays a very strong role in influencing one's mind in mental migration. Social standing could also be described as social one's social status in the country. One's social status in the society may lead to differences in freedom and benefits. Race discrimination is another social aspect that one could not miss mentioning in mental migration. Simpson & Yinger (1985) noted that 'discrimination may be defined as the effective injurious treatment of persons on grounds rationally irrelevant to the situation'. Discrimination is always accompanied by tension and often by conflict. It can be found in the frustration-aggression hypothesis and a group of concepts related to it (Simpson & Yinger, 1985, p.73). One may not feel secure and safety if social discrimination rates are very high in the specific country. Peer influences are very important in forming mental migration through the social aspect. Taking an example for instance, Mr. A is very keen of living a better life with his family. His neighbour

Mr. B plans to migrate to another country which he believes that it will provide him and his family a much better life and growing environment. Being good neighbours as usual, Mr. A will be curious about the migration issue of Mr. B naturally. By educating Mr. A the benefits of migration, he will definitely form a mental migration in his mind, subtracting all the contingencies. As this issue occurs, mental migration will be transformed into behavioural change in a very quick time. From the example above, it is clear that mental migration is the first step in migrating.

Political Aspect

Political aspect is also a very important aspect in forming mental migration in one's mind. One may not live or migrate to a country which is unsafe and full with negative political issues (Gordon 1994). By looking at this aspect, the view of social justice stands a majority role. For example, one may not live in a country which is packed with wars throughout the year. As a contrast, one will choose to live or migrate to a country which is peaceful and zero inflation throughout the year. Positive political issues lead to positive social aspect, and good standards of living. By looking at the political aspect, it is more difficult in forming mental migration. This is because that firm political aspect of a country is often built through a long period of time. As a firm political aspect of a country is formed, with the help of media and social aspect, one may perceive that the respectful country is safe and secure to live in. By then, mental migration will be formed naturally. Again, mental migration is the first step in migrating.

Living in a life of poverty is a very disastrous term in each society. Citizens of a country will suffer whenever the economic aspect of a country becomes negative. In other words, the country will become insecure in which it will lead to the rise of negative political and social aspects in the society. Taking an example for instance, country A suffers from economical problems throughout the years. Citizens have to stay with hunger, and to fight even for basic necessities. As economical problems turn up, it leads to the uprising of negative social aspects naturally. Country A will become insecure and unsafe for one to live in. This example proves that whenever the economical aspect of a country is rich, it will create a positive reaction and perception in one's mind. One may not form a mental migration if a country is still suffering for daily needs and still lives with inferior goods. One may only live in a country which grows in a tremendous speed economically, and works for luxury demands. Subsequently, mental migration will be formed through a period of timeframe. Again, mental migration is the first step in migrating,

Besides that, 'the traditional cost-benefit focus has been on earnings and employment outcomes, which indicates the implicit assumption that wage differentials are the primary motivation for migration' (Greenwood cited in Gordon 1994). This phrase could be determined through the real life example from the news on 20th September 2006. The wage paid for bachelor holder police officers in Malaysia. The wage paid is as low as RM675 with the cost of living in Kuala Lumpur. While comparing the same occupation with the same qualifications in other countries such as Australia and United Kingdom, it appears a very direct contrast. Whenever this happens, corruption and bribery will occur subsequently. As a fact, individuals work for a better living for themselves and their family. Whenever there is a huge

comparison through the wage differentials within countries, mental migration will be formed in individual's mind naturally.

Cultural Aspect

Cultural aspect is also a very important aspect in forming mental migration. Culture has been described as 'the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects that are passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a human group or society' (Kendall 2004: 43). Culture is essential for individual and society to survive because individual may rely on culture for information to survive. For instances, the way of earning and spending money, types of food to consume, and how to behave. Culture could be learnt through interaction, observation, and imitation in order to participate as members of the group (Samovar and Porter, 991, Cited in Kendall 2004: 43). Cultural aspect is formed out of a country's social standards, religions and living value. Cultural can be either formed through a long period of time or a short period of time. For example, the culture of wearing the cheongsam and using chopsticks to dine is a cultural habit built through a long period of time and it still stays in the Chinese community today. In contrast, the pop culture varies frequently through the change of trend from time to time. Positive cultural values practiced in a country forms one's mental migration. Other than that, the percentage of the same community also influences mental migration in an aspect as well. As cultural aspects take place in the discussion of mental migration, it depends on individual's adaptation to the cultural values. Understanding on each cultural values is very important in mental migration, as this aspects needs a long period of time to adapt before forming a positive outcome mentally. Again, mental migration is always the first step to migration.

In fact, the perspective of migration intentions has been grouped as choice behaviour. Accordingly, preconditions are essential in developing migration choice behaviour. Coale (1973) addressed preconditions for fertility behaviour change. The value of specifying preconditions is in defining a threshold of societal change that can reliably identify a population in which a behaviour. There are three preconditions: 1) fertility must be within the calculus of choice, 2) reduced fertility must be advantageous, 3) effective techniques of fertility reduction must be available. No doubt, factors like economic, political, social and discrimination motivate individual to migrate, but not all people choose to move either. The reason is, the consciousness towards certain issues is not available. Therefore, migration is not physically possible at that stage. Basically, migration choice must be cognitively and physically available to potential decision makers.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, an understanding of media influence and mental migration is critical important to determine motivation in migrating and life cycle behind migration decisions. The reason is mental migration is formed by perception and attitude. Therefore, the process of perceiving must be learnt in order to understand the formation of perception. Then, the better understanding about mental migration will be gained later. Other than that, mental migration is affected by numerous internal and external aspects which classified as cultural, economical, political, social and

media. The importance of each aspect has been discussed and examples have been given to strongly support the statement. Based on the findings elaborated above, a great idea and understanding about the formation and importance of mental migration has been gained in the overall.

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