RECONTEXTUALIZING NOSTALGIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE VIRAL REVIVAL OF "*PRETTY LITTLE BABY*"

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ABSTRACT

The resurgence of nostalgic songs on social media has become a prominent feature of contemporary digital culture, particularly on short-form video platforms that facilitate the circulation and reinterpretation of older cultural artifacts. One notable example is "Pretty Little Baby" by Connie Francis, originally released in 1962 and revived through viral social media engagement in 2025. This study examines how the song's meanings have been reconstructed across historical and digital contexts and explores the role of multimodal discourse in shaping audience interpretations. This study employed a qualitative case-study approach integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and multimodal discourse analysis to examine selected social media videos, captions, hashtags, visual aesthetics, and audience interactions. The study investigates the song's original sociocultural meanings, its contemporary reinterpretation, the affective meanings generated through audience participation, and the influence of participatory culture and platform affordances on its viral circulation.The findings indicate that the song originally embodied themes of youthful innocence and romantic simplicity characteristic of the early 1960s. In its contemporary resurgence, however, audiences reframe the song as a symbol of nostalgia, emotional comfort, intimacy, and longing for a less complex past. These meanings are constructed through the interaction of audiovisual elements, user-generated content, and platform-specific communicative practices.The study concludes that the viral revival of "Pretty Little Baby" demonstrates a process of multimodal recontextualization in which historical musical texts are discursively reconstructed within contemporary digital environments. The findings highlight how audience participation and algorithmically mediated platform dynamics contribute to the ongoing transformation of cultural meanings in the digital age.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, multimodal discourse, digital nostalgia, social media, recontextualization*

A. Introduction

Music has long functioned as a cultural artifact through which societies express emotion, identity, memory, and ideology (Frith, 1996). In the contemporary digital era, however, songs no longer circulate solely through radio broadcasting or physical media. Instead, music is increasingly mediated by algorithm-driven social media platforms that allow old cultural products to re-emerge and acquire new meanings through participatory practices, remix culture, and multimodal storytelling (van Dijck, 2013; Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013).

Within these environments, nostalgic content is frequently amplified because emotionally resonant media often generate stronger engagement and algorithmic visibility (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2018). Consequently, songs from previous decades can unexpectedly return to public attention and become culturally relevant for entirely different generations.

One recent example is “Pretty Little Baby” by Connie Francis, originally released in 1962, which resurfaced and became viral on social media platforms in 2025. During its original release in the early 1960s, the song represented the characteristics of postwar American popular music that emphasized youthful innocence, romantic simplicity, and emotional tenderness. Songs during this period frequently portrayed idealized forms of romance associated with purity, affection, and traditional femininity (Frith, 1996). Through soft melodic arrangements and repetitive lyrical structures, “Pretty Little Baby” reflected what was commonly perceived as “innocent love” within youth culture at the time.

For instance, lyrics such as:

“Pretty little baby, I’m so in love with you”

construct a direct and emotionally uncomplicated expression of affection that aligns with the sentimental aesthetics of early 1960s American pop music. The song also employs symbolic imagery such as flowers, birds, and gentle emotional language, reinforcing themes of innocence and emotional purity. In its original sociocultural context, the song functioned primarily as a romantic popular song intended for entertainment and emotional identification among young listeners.

However, the meanings attached to the song in its 2025 viral resurgence differ significantly from its original context. On social media platforms, users no longer interpret the song merely as a representation of teenage romance. Instead, they recontextualize it through videos portraying childhood memories, family intimacy, emotional comfort, nostalgic aesthetics, and idealized everyday life. Captions such as “this song feels like home,” “life felt softer back then,” and “songs used to feel more genuine” demonstrate how users collectively reconstruct the song as a symbol of

emotional safety and longing for simplicity. In this sense, the song is transformed from a 1960s romantic pop track into a contemporary digital nostalgia artifact.

This phenomenon illustrates what Boym (2001) describes as nostalgia not merely as remembrance of the past, but as a reconstruction of emotionally meaningful memories shaped by present social conditions. Similarly, Niemeyer (2014) argues that digital nostalgia emerges through media practices that allow users to reinterpret older cultural texts according to contemporary emotional needs. Therefore, the resurgence of "Pretty Little Baby" cannot simply be understood as musical revival, but rather as a process of discursive recontextualization in which meanings are reconstructed through multimodal interaction, audience participation, and platform affordances.

Existing scholarship has examined related issues from several perspectives. Research on participatory culture emphasizes that digital audiences are no longer passive consumers but active producers of meaning who reinterpret and redistribute cultural texts through remix practices and collaborative participation (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2013). Studies on platform culture further demonstrate how recommendation systems and algorithmic infrastructures shape the visibility and circulation of cultural content online (van Dijck, 2013; Gillespie, 2018; Bucher, 2018). Meanwhile, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been widely applied to examine how songs and media texts communicate ideology, identity, and social values (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2001).

Several previous studies have also explored music and nostalgia through discourse-oriented perspectives. Palangan (2024), in "The Enduring Appeal of Forever Young: A Critical Discourse Analysis," argues that nostalgic songs maintain cultural relevance because audiences continuously reinterpret them according to changing sociocultural conditions. Similarly, studies on soundtrack discourse suggest that songs acquire new meanings when placed within different media and interpretive contexts. These approaches demonstrate that musical

meaning is socially constructed rather than fixed.

Nevertheless, previous studies still tend to focus primarily on lyrical analysis, artist-centered narratives, or technological mechanisms of virality. Limited attention has been given to how audiences employ multimodal resources such as captions, visuals, editing styles, hashtags, gestures, and audiovisual synchronization to reconstruct emotional meanings around revived songs in social media environments. Furthermore, few studies explicitly compare the original sociocultural meaning of a nostalgic song with its contemporary reinterpretation in digital culture. As a result, there remains a gap in understanding how older songs are discursively transformed across historical and technological contexts.

Addressing this gap is important because it contributes to broader discussions concerning digital memory, emotional culture, and participatory media practices. Examining the viral resurgence of “Pretty Little Baby” enables a deeper understanding of how audiences negotiate nostalgia, innocence, and emotional identity within algorithmically mediated environments. In addition, the study contributes to the development of multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis by extending its application beyond textual lyrics toward audience-driven audiovisual discourse.

Based on these considerations, this study investigates how “Pretty Little Baby” is recontextualized through multimodal discourse on social media. More specifically, the study compares the song’s original meaning during its 1960s release with its reinterpretation during the 2025 viral resurgence. It further examines how users construct nostalgic and affective meanings through visual, textual, and auditory practices within social media environments.

B. Research Method

This study is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), multimodality, platform studies, and digital nostalgia. These interconnected perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for examining how meanings surrounding “Pretty Little Baby” are reconstructed across historical and digital contexts.

According to Fairclough (1995), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines discourse through three interconnected dimensions: the micro level (text), the meso level (discursive practice), and the macro level (social practice). These dimensions enable researchers to analyze how meanings are constructed, circulated, and connected to broader sociocultural contexts.

At the micro level, analysis focuses on the linguistic and semiotic features of the text itself. In the case of "Pretty Little Baby," this includes examining the song lyrics, lexical choices, expressions of affection, pronoun use, and representations of romantic relationships. The lyrics emphasize themes of youthful innocence, devotion, and emotional intimacy through simple and affectionate language. In multimodal contexts, textual analysis may also include visual elements accompanying the song in social media videos, such as facial expressions, imagery, editing styles, colors, and background settings that contribute to meaning-making.

The meso level examines how the text is produced, distributed, consumed, and reinterpreted by audiences. For this study, the analysis focuses on how "Pretty Little Baby" was circulated on social media platforms and how users participated in creating new meanings through videos, captions, hashtags, comments, and trends. The song's resurgence in 2025 demonstrates how audiences actively transformed a 1962 musical text into contemporary digital content. Platform affordances, algorithmic recommendations, and participatory culture played significant roles in shaping the song's visibility and popularity.

At the macro level, analysis considers the broader social, cultural, historical, and ideological contexts surrounding the discourse. Originally released in 1962, "Pretty Little Baby" reflected cultural values associated with youthful romance and traditional gender norms prevalent during that period. In contrast, its 2025 revival occurred within a digital culture characterized by nostalgia, emotional self-expression, and participatory media practices. The song's renewed popularity reflects broader societal desires for emotional comfort, authenticity, and connection in an

increasingly complex digital environment. Thus, the song's meanings are linked to wider cultural shifts in how audiences engage with the past and construct collective memories through social media.

The study primarily adopts Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework consisting of textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. At the textual level, the analysis focuses on captions, hashtags, visual composition, emotional vocabulary, and audiovisual synchronization. At the level of discursive practice, the study examines how users reproduce and circulate meanings through remixing, reposting, trend participation, and hashtag use. At the sociocultural level, the analysis interprets how nostalgic discourse reflects broader emotional and cultural conditions in contemporary digital society.

The study also incorporates multimodal discourse analysis because meaning on social media is constructed not only through language but also through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes, including image, sound, gesture, editing, and spatial composition (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Jewitt, 2014). Social media videos inherently combine textual, visual, and auditory resources; therefore, analyzing the viral resurgence of "Pretty Little Baby" requires attention to how these elements collectively construct emotional resonance.

In addition, the study draws upon platform studies, which emphasize that digital platforms are not neutral spaces but technologically structured environments shaped by algorithms, recommendation systems, and engagement metrics (van Dijck, 2013; Gillespie, 2018; Bucher, 2018). These systems influence which songs become visible, viral, and emotionally significant within online culture. Accordingly, the resurgence of "Pretty Little Baby" is understood as the result of both user participation and algorithmic amplification.

The concept of digital nostalgia further informs this study. Boym (2001) argues that nostalgia is not simply longing for the past but a reconstruction of emotionally meaningful memories shaped by contemporary anxieties and desires. Niemeyer (2014) similarly suggests

that digital media enable users to continuously reinterpret older cultural artifacts through participatory practices. In this study, nostalgia is therefore understood as an active and multimodal meaning-making process rather than passive remembrance.

By integrating CDA, multimodality, platform studies, and digital nostalgia, this framework enables the study to analyze how “Pretty Little Baby” shifts from a 1960s romantic pop song into a contemporary symbol of emotional comfort and digital nostalgia.

This study employs a qualitative case-study design to investigate how “Pretty Little Baby” was recontextualized through multimodal discourse during its viral resurgence on social media in 2025. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to interpret meanings, emotional representations, and discursive practices embedded within user-generated audiovisual content rather than measure statistical relationships.

The study draws on Fairclough’s (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary analytical framework and incorporates multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) to examine the interaction of linguistic, visual, and auditory resources. The integration of these approaches enables an analysis of both discursive meanings and the multimodal processes through which those meanings are constructed and circulated in digital environments.

The dataset consists of thirty publicly accessible short-form videos collected from Instagram Reels and TikTok during the peak circulation of “Pretty Little Baby” in 2025. A purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) was employed to select videos that were most relevant to the research objectives. Selection criteria included: (1) the use of “Pretty Little Baby” as the primary audio track, (2) high engagement indicators such as views, likes, shares, and comments, and (3) thematic relevance to nostalgia, emotional intimacy, family memories, romantic affection, or sentimental storytelling. The sample size was considered adequate because thematic saturation was achieved through recurring multimodal patterns across the dataset.

The units of analysis comprised visual imagery and editing styles, captions and on-screen text, hashtags, audio-

visual synchronization, gestures and performative expressions, and audience comments. These elements were examined as interconnected semiotic resources contributing to meaning-making processes.

Data analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the videos were repeatedly viewed to identify recurring multimodal patterns. Second, an inductive coding process was employed to categorize dominant themes, including nostalgia, innocence, emotional comfort, family intimacy, and romantic sentimentality. Third, multimodal elements were analyzed using concepts proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), including salience, modality, composition, gaze, and framing. To enhance the reliability of the analysis, coding consistency was ensured through repeated coding and systematic comparison across the dataset. Finally, Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional CDA framework was applied.

At the textual level, the analysis focused on captions, hashtags, emotional vocabulary, visual aesthetics, and audio-visual synchronization. At the discursive-practice level, attention was directed to processes of production, circulation, remixing, trend participation, and audience engagement. At the sociocultural-practice level, the study examined how the representations reflected broader cultural phenomena, including digital nostalgia, collective memory, emotional longing, and platform-mediated participation.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study employed theoretical triangulation by integrating perspectives from CDA, multimodality, platform studies, and digital nostalgia research. An audit trail was maintained throughout the analytical process to ensure transparency and consistency in coding and interpretation. Ethical considerations were observed in accordance with internet research guidelines (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Although all materials were publicly accessible, usernames and identifiable personal information were anonymized to protect user privacy.

C. Research Results

At the textual level, the lyrics of "Pretty Little Baby" construct a discourse of youthful innocence and romantic affection through simple

emotional vocabulary and direct expressions of love. The line “Pretty little baby, I’m so in love with you” employs intimate language that positions romantic relationships as emotionally pure and uncomplicated. References to flowers, birds, and tenderness further reinforce symbolic associations with innocence and idealized femininity.

The multimodal analysis reveals that these textual meanings are transformed through visual and auditory resources in social media videos. Across the dataset, users frequently combined the song with childhood photographs, family interactions, pets, domestic spaces, and romantic moments. Warm color grading, vintage filters, soft lighting, and slow-motion editing intensified emotional resonance and contributed to nostalgic interpretations. Captions such as “This song feels like home” and “Life was softer back then” further shifted the song’s meaning from romantic affection to emotional comfort and longing.

Table 1
Comprehensive Multimodal Coding Framework for the Analysis of TikTok and Instagram Videos Featuring "Pretty Little Baby"

No	Video Code	Platform	Salience	Modality
1	TT01	TikTok	Young woman	High modality, warm color grading, soft natural lighting, realistic outdoor setting
2	TT02	TikTok	Dancing artist	High modality with realistic details and a clear background
3	TT03	TikTok	Two dachsund dogs	High modality through natural lighting, rich colors, and high image clarity
4	TT04	TikTok	A beautiful woman lip-syncing	High modality, as the image presents realistic color, depth, and detailed visual representation
5	TT05	TikTok	A beautiful woman lip-syncing	High modality with vivid colors and natural lighting.
6	TT06	TikTok	Dog with a flower In its mouth	High modality due to realistic color representation.
7	TT07	TikTok	Woman in prom dress lip-syncing	High modality with sharp visual details and clear focus.
8	TT08	TikTok	Mother and baby dancing in the garden	High modality through bright illumination and high image clarity.
9	TT09	TikTok	Calico Kitten	High modality with rich color saturation and detailed textures.
15	TT15	TikTok	Baby and Pets	High modality with excellent image resolution and clarity.
16	IG01	Instagram	Two boys singing karaoke	High modality due to detailed visual representation.
17	IG02	Instagram	Cat and bird	High modality with bright, well-balanced lighting.
18	IG03	Instagram	Young girl	High modality featuring clear contextual details.
19	IG04	Instagram	Kitten	High modality with naturalistic color and visual sharpness.
20	IG05	Instagram	Cats	High modality supported by high-quality visual elements.
21	IG06	Instagram	Flower bouquet	High modality with realistic lighting and color differentiation.
22	IG07	Instagram	A beautiful woman sitting on the grass lip-syncing	High modality emphasizing detailed foreground and background.
23	IG08	Instagram	Kitten	High modality with vibrant colors and realistic textures.
24	IG09	Instagram	French Bulldog wearing a white lace dress	High modality through high-definition visual presentation.
25	IG10	Instagram	Kitten	High modality with enhanced brightness and image precision.
26	IG11	Instagram	Group of Young Women	High modality characterized by clear depth and realistic appearance.
27	IG12	Instagram	A young girl and blue objects	High modality with visually rich and detailed imagery.
28	IG13	Instagram	Baby	High modality with natural illumination and vivid contrast.
29	IG14	Instagram	Barbie Rapunzel	High modality supported by realistic environmental context.
30	IG15	Instagram	Child in flower garden	High modality with clear, colorful, and lifelike visual representation.

No	Video Code	Platform	Composition	Gaze	Framing	Theme
1	TT01	TikTok	Right weighted	Indirect	Medium Close-up	Nostalgia
2	TT02	TikTok	Center	Direct	Long Shot	Sentimental Representation
3	TT03	TikTok	Wide	Indirect	Extreme Long Shot	Sentimental Representation
4	TT04	TikTok	Center	Direct	Long Shot	Sentimental Representation
5	TT05	TikTok	Center	Direct	Medium Close-up	Sentimental Representation
6	TT06	TikTok	Center	Direct	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
7	TT07	TikTok	Center	Direct	Long Shot	Sentimental Representation
8	TT08	TikTok	Rule of thirds	Indirect	Long Shot	Family Memories
9	TT09	TikTok	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Emotional intimacy
10	TT10	TikTok	Center	Direct	Medium Close-up	Romantic Affection
11	TT11	TikTok	Center	Direct	Medium Close-up	Emotional intimacy
12	TT12	TikTok	Center	Direct	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
13	TT13	TikTok	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
14	TT14	TikTok	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
15	TT15	TikTok	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
16	IG01	Instagram	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Family Memories
17	IG02	Instagram	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Emotional intimacy
18	IG03	Instagram	Center	Direct	Medium Close-up	Sentimental Representation
19	IG04	Instagram	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
20	IG05	Instagram	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
21	IG06	Instagram	Center	No gaze	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
22	IG07	Instagram	Rule of thirds	Direct	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
23	IG08	Instagram	Center	Indirect	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
24	IG09	Instagram	Center	Direct	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
25	IG10	Instagram	Center	Direct	Close-up	Sentimental Representation
26	IG11	Instagram	Rule of thirds	Direct	Close-up	Emotional intimacy
27	IG12	Instagram	Center	Direct	Medium Close-up	Sentimental Representation
28	IG13	Instagram	Center	Direct	Close-up	Family Memories
29	IG14	Instagram	Rule of thirds	Indirect	Long Shot	Nostalgia
30	IG15	Instagram	Center	Indirect	Long Shot	Sentimental Representation

Table 2

Distribution of Dominant Themes in Selected TikTok and Instagram Videos

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Nostalgia	2	6.67
Emotional Intimacy	4	13.33
Family Memories	3	10.00
Romantic Affection	1	3.33
Sentimental Representation	20	66.67
Total	30	100

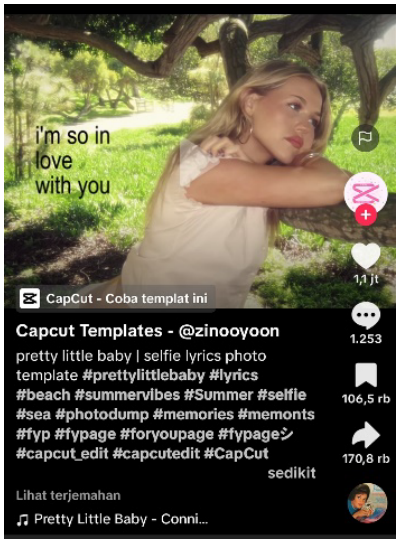
As presented in Table 2, sentimental representation emerged as the most dominant theme, appearing in 20 of the 30 selected TikTok and Instagram videos (66.7%). This was followed by emotional intimacy with four videos (13.3%), family memories with three videos (10.0%), and nostalgia with two videos (6.7%). In contrast, romantic affection was the least frequent theme, occurring in only one video (3.3%). These findings suggest that users primarily employed the song Pretty Little Baby to express tender emotions, sentimental moments, and nostalgic experiences rather than exclusively romantic relationships. These findings indicate that users prioritize emotional resonance over romantic narratives when appropriating nostalgic music on social media.

Table 3

Distribution of Salient Visual Elements in Selected TikTok and Instagram Videos

Salience	Frequency
Woman	8
Child	5
Cat and Bird	5
Baby	5
Flowers	1
Dog	3
Mother and Baby	1
Woman and Dog	1
Barbie	1
Total	30

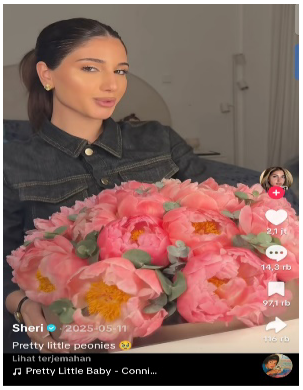
Figure 1 - NOSTALGIA



VISUAL ELEMENTS	MULTIMODAL CODING
Salience	Young Woman
Modality	High modality
Composition	Right weighted
Gaze	Indirect
Framing	Medium close-up

he image shows a young woman leaning against a tree with her chin resting on her hand. She looks away from the camera, creating an indirect gaze that suggests reflection. The right-weighted composition emphasizes the participant, while the medium close-up framing highlights her facial expression. Together, these multimodal features evoke a sense of reflective nostalgia and emotional contemplation.

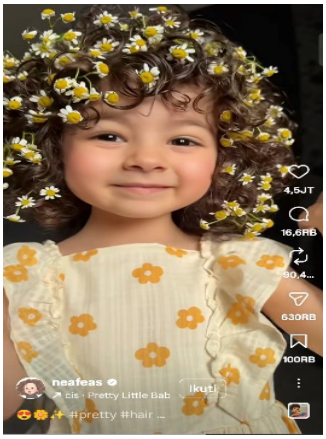
Figure 2 – ROMANTIC AFFECTION



VISUAL ELEMENTS	MULTIMODAL CODING
Salience	Young Woman
Modality	High Modality
Composition	Center
Gaze	Direct
Framing	Medium close-up

The image shows a woman holding a bouquet of pink flowers while looking toward the camera. The medium close-up shot emphasizes both her facial expression and the flowers, creating a warm and elegant atmosphere. The soft lighting enhances the sense of beauty and appreciation. Together, the direct gaze, centered composition, and bouquet function as multimodal resources that communicate romantic affection and emotional appreciation.

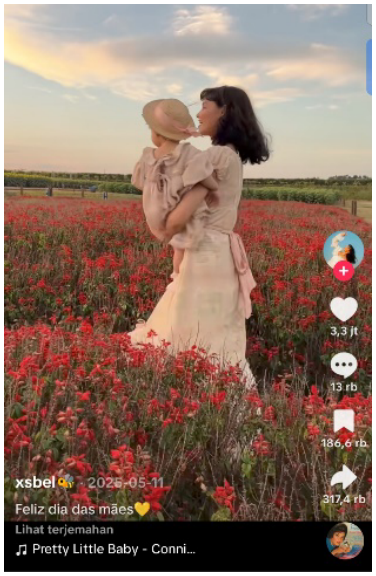
Figure 3 – SENTIMENTAL REPRESENTATION



VISUAL ELEMENTS	MULTIMODAL CODING
Salience	Young Girl
Modality	High modality
Composition	Center
Gaze	Direct
Framing	Medium close-up

The image shows a smiling young child wearing a dress with floral patterns and small flowers woven into curly hair. The medium close-up shot emphasizes the child's cheerful expression, while the soft lighting and floral elements create a gentle, innocent, and joyful atmosphere. These multimodal elements construct a sentimental representation by emphasizing innocence, happiness, and emotional warmth.

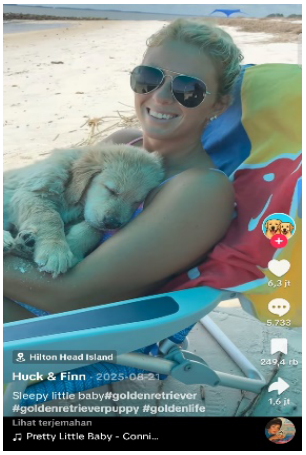
Figure 4 – FAMILY MEMORIES



VISUAL ELEMENTS	MULTIMODAL CODING
Salience	Mother & Baby
Modality	High Modality
Composition	Rule of Thirds
Gaze	Indirect
Framing	Long Shot

The image depicts a woman holding a child in a field of blooming flowers during sunset. The long shot captures their close interaction, while the warm natural lighting creates a peaceful and affectionate atmosphere. The scene conveys a strong sense of love, care, and togetherness. The rule-of-thirds composition, indirect gaze, and long-shot framing reinforce a sense of family bonding, togetherness, and cherished memories.

Figure 5 – EMOTIONAL INTIMACY



VISUAL ELEMENTS	MULTIMODAL CODING
Salience	Woman & Puppy
Modality	High modality
Composition	Center
Gaze	Direct
Framing	Medium Close-up

The image shows a woman smiling while holding a sleeping Golden Retriever puppy on a beach. The medium close-up shot highlights the affectionate interaction between the woman and the puppy. Their relaxed expressions and the beach setting create a warm, peaceful, and comforting atmosphere. The close interaction between the woman and the puppy, reinforced by the medium close-up framing and direct gaze, conveys emotional intimacy, comfort, and affection.

Across the five representative figures, high modality consistently enhances the realism of emotional experiences. Indirect gaze is mainly associated with nostalgic scenes, whereas direct gaze appears in sentimental and romantic representations. These multimodal patterns indicate that visual resources play an important role in reconstructing digital nostalgia.These findings support Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) argument that meaning emerges through the interaction of linguistic, visual, and auditory modes rather than through language alone.

At the sociocultural level, the findings demonstrate a significant shift in the cultural meanings associated with the song. In its original 1960s context, "Pretty Little Baby" reflected dominant social values concerning romance, femininity, and youth identity within postwar American popular culture. The song functioned primarily as entertainment and emotional identification for contemporary audiences.

In contrast, its resurgence in 2025 occurred within a digital culture characterized by nostalgia, emotional self-expression, and participatory media practices. Most users engaging with the song had no direct experience of the historical period in which it was produced. Nevertheless, they collectively constructed an imagined past associated with emotional warmth, simplicity, authenticity, and interpersonal closeness.

Following Boym (2001), nostalgia in this context functions less as historical memory than as emotional reconstruction shaped by present concerns. The song became a

symbolic resource through which users expressed desires for comfort and stability within contemporary digital life.

These findings support Fairclough's (1995) argument that discourse is socially situated and continuously reshaped by changing historical and cultural conditions.

The analysis demonstrates that the viral resurgence of "Pretty Little Baby" represents a process of discursive recontextualization. At the micro level, new meanings were produced through multimodal combinations of lyrics, visuals, captions, and sound. At the meso level, audiences actively circulated and reconstructed these meanings through participatory practices and platform-mediated interactions. At the macro level, broader cultural discourses of nostalgia and emotional longing provided the sociocultural framework through which the song acquired contemporary relevance.

The findings therefore suggest that historical musical texts do not retain fixed meanings. Instead, their significance is continuously reconstructed through interactions between discourse, audience participation, and changing cultural contexts.

These findings are consistent with Palangan (2024), who argues that nostalgic songs remain culturally relevant because audiences continuously reinterpret their meanings across changing sociocultural contexts. However, the present study extends previous research by demonstrating that the recontextualization of Pretty Little Baby is not constructed solely through song lyrics but through the interaction of multiple multimodal resources, including visual composition, gaze, modality, captions, and audiovisual synchronization. This suggests that digital nostalgia emerges through the integration of linguistic, visual, and auditory modes, allowing audiences to actively reconstruct emotional meanings within participatory social media environments.

The predominance of sentimental representation across the dataset suggests that users engage with nostalgic music primarily as an emotional resource rather than merely as entertainment. Instead of reproducing the song's original romantic narrative, participants recontextualize it through personal memories, family interactions, pets, and everyday experiences that evoke warmth, comfort, and emotional security. This transformation illustrates how multimodal resources—including visual composition, gaze, modality, captions, and audiovisual synchronization—work together to construct meanings that extend beyond the original lyrical content. Consequently, nostalgia is not simply recalled but actively reconstructed through users' multimodal practices within participatory digital culture.

List of TikTok and Instagram Videos Used as Research Data

No	Video Code	Platform	Video Link
1	TT01	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvEGxHR/
2	TT02	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvEshh8/
3	TT03	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvEW7Wb/
4	TT04	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvETSeF/
5	TT05	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvE4cRq/
6	TT06	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvEgmuJ/
7	TT07	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvE4PCq/
8	TT08	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvEqssG/
9	TT09	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvE3byL/
10	TT10	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvExEwF/
11	TT11	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvEHxVE/
12	TT12	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvEWKWU/
13	TT13	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvoJWFd/
14	TT14	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvo23DQ/
15	TT15	TikTok	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSXvoerLH/
16	IG01	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DXpSRBpDNJX
17	IG02	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKaS1o-hYam
18	IG03	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DbD2agiMJ5G
19	IG04	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKZddhmNRvk
20	IG05	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJjaIiOyNw5
21	IG06	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DaHrLDBofnD
22	IG07	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/Da5BJL2KQXp
23	IG08	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DaY4GaWhLCU
24	IG09	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DaiBvguv8PN
25	IG10	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DazCnu3MXPV
26	IG11	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJ5ZeDPyfTC
27	IG12	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJzG-FqB4OQ
28	IG13	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJmHic4NYPp
29	IG14	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJssAscBi45
30	IG15	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/reel/DLaHqZoo13D

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the viral revival of Pretty Little Baby represents a process of multimodal recontextualization in which a historical romantic song is transformed into a contemporary symbol of nostalgia, emotional comfort, and interpersonal intimacy. Through the interaction of visual, textual, and auditory resources, social media users actively reconstruct the song's meanings within participatory digital culture. The findings highlight the importance of audience participation and platform affordances in shaping cultural memory and emotional discourse online, and they contribute to the development of multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis by extending its application to audience-generated audiovisual practices. This study is limited to thirty publicly accessible TikTok and Instagram videos collected during the 2025 resurgence of "Pretty Little Baby." Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of this viral phenomenon and may not be generalized to all forms of nostalgic music on social media. Future research may examine larger datasets, compare multiple nostalgic songs across different social media platforms, or investigate audience interpretations using interviews or digital ethnography to provide a deeper understanding of multimodal recontextualization in online environments.

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