

**For many Shanghainese, *lingkao* was a popular and practical way of shopping in an age of scarcity. Customers would bring their reusable containers to the shop to fill with products such as soy sauce, laundry detergent, shampoo, and vanishing cream.**

packaged amount.

*Lingkao* had many advantages, including lower prices and a reduction in packaging waste.

For many Shanghainese, *lingkao* was a popular and practical way of shopping in an age of scarcity. Customers would bring their reusable containers to the shop to fill with products such as soy sauce, laundry detergent, shampoo, and vanishing cream.

The Yangshupu Road *lingkao* shop was particularly popular with locals. The shop sold time-honored brands, which were familiar to many older Shanghainese, such as Fan Brand, Bee & Flower, and Shanghai Yaozao, a kind of herbal soap.

The products were sold at affordable prices, and plastic bottles could be reused while shopping, making it a more environmentally friendly way to shop.

The *lingkao* shop had been operating for more than 30 years, and its manager, Wang Shihai, was sad to see it close, even though temporarily.

He remembered the good old days. "When business was good, we could sell 13 barrels of laundry detergent a day, totally 650 kilograms!" he recalled.

In Wang's opinion,

Shanghainese like *lingkao*, because of its affordability.

"The process of managing money is one of the joys of Shanghainese's life," he said with a smile.

"Laundry detergent here is a third cheaper than other stores," one of the aunties noted.

"Plastic bottles can also be used repeatedly while shopping, it is very environmentally friendly, and buying as much as I need avoids waste," another aunt pointed out.

"Stint on money, or it may run short," she added.

Even before the *lingkao* shop's relocation plans, the time-honored brands sold there had undergone an upgrade to cater to a younger market. The brands' assortment has increased, and the positioning has become more segmented, with varied new products.

However, despite the upgrade, the shop's products are still sold at affordable prices. The classic Bee & Flower's sandalwood soap costs only around 5 or 6 yuan (US\$0.72-0.86) per bar and is often on sale for just 3 or 4 yuan.

Many young netizens have left messages on WeChat suggesting promoting the frugal and environmentally friendly way of shopping.



Shanghai Soap Co Ltd's *lingkao* shop on Yangshupu Road in Yangpu District. Many regular customers queue up outside the store. — Photos / Ti Gong



In this file photo, a boy uses a ladle to get the soy sauce from a vat into a customer's bottle through a funnel.

“

Plastic bottles can also be used repeatedly while shopping, it is very environmentally friendly, and buying as much as I need avoids waste.