To understand why DeepSeek has made such a stir, it helps to start with AI and its capability to make a computer seem like a person.

A machine uses the technology to learn and solve problems, typically by being trained on massive amounts of information and recognising patterns.

The end result is software that can have conversations like a person or predict people's shopping habits.

In recent years, it has become best known as the tech behind chatbots such as ChatGPT - and DeepSeek - also known as generative AI.

These programs again learn from huge swathes of data, including online text and images, to be able to make new content.

But these tools can also create falsehoods and often repeat the biases contained within their training data.

Millions of people use tools such as ChatGPT to help them with everyday tasks like writing emails, summarising text, and answering questions - and others even use them to help with basic coding and studying.

DeepSeek is the name of a free AI-powered chatbot, which looks, feels and works very much like ChatGPT.

That means it's , though exactly how well it works compared to its rivals is up for debate.

It is reportedly as powerful as OpenAI's o1 model - released at the end of last year - in tasks including mathematics and coding.

Like o1, R1 is a "reasoning" model. These models produce responses incrementally, simulating how humans reason through problems or ideas.

Deepseek says it has been able to do this cheaply - researchers behind it claim it cost $6m (£4.8m) to train, a fraction of the "over $100m" alluded to by OpenAI boss Sam Altman when discussing GPT-4.

It has also seemingly be able to minimise the impact of US restrictions on the most powerful chips reaching China.

DeepSeek's founder reportedly built up a store of Nvidia A100 chips, which have been banned from export to China since September 2022. Some experts believe he paired these chips with cheaper, less sophisticated ones - ending up with a much more efficient process.

DeepSeek also uses less memory than its rivals, ultimately reducing the cost to perform tasks for users.

That combination of performance and lower cost helped DeepSeek's AI assistant become the most-downloaded free app on Apple's App Store when it was released in the US.

The same day, it was hit with "large-scale malicious attacks", the company said, causing the company to temporary limit registrations.

Its website also experienced outages.

Like many other Chinese AI models - Baidu's Ernie or Doubao by ByteDance - DeepSeek is trained to avoid politically sensitive questions.

When the BBC asked the app  on 4 June 1989, DeepSeek did not give any details about the massacre, a taboo topic in China, which is subject to government censorship.