Due to its advancement as an economic sector, tourism has been promoted as a solution to some existing problems in developing countries, and as an opportunity to stimulate business generation and promote economic activity. Despite this, there are still few studies that put light on residents of the tourist destination as research subjects, although they are considered a key element in the tourism management and destination development. In terms of competitiveness, the manipulation of images of the city, cultures and experiences is one of the most important policy instruments to deal with competitiveness between places. However, when considering the success of the tourist destination in the long run, one must take into account the importance of the sustainability of the place, by adopting strategies to improve the tourism destination competitiveness, and ensuring its survival. This study aimed to assess the relationship between sustainable development and the image of the tourist destination as perceived by the residents, in order to contribute to making strategic actions that favor the competitiveness of the place. By conducting a survey of 299 residents, statistical analysis and structural equation modeling, the results reveal the direct and positive influence of sustainable development on the tourism destination image, confirming its importance as a factor to be considered in marketing strategies towards the place competitiveness.

KEY WORDS: marketing, sustainable development, tourism destination image, residents.